

@Gamer

ISSUE 022 | SEPTEMBER 2012

+

ZOMBIES!

They're coming. Games can teach us how to survive. Are you prepared?

PG. 48

HANDS-ON »»

RESIDENT EVIL

FOURTH CAMPAIGN

\$160
WORTH OF COUPONS!

Including \$30 off Prototype 2 and \$20 off Mass Effect 3!

PG. 31

Mac
Rev

Find out if this year's entry is a must-play. **PG. 62**

Breaking into the world of online warfare. **PG. 14**

The most interesting of this generation. **PG. 54**



15
P-30 P4920
129223

0016/4751

FUTURE US, INC., 4000 SHORELINE CT STE 400,
SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94080-1960
#BYNSXBZ **AUTO**SCH 5-DIGIT 85023 MIX COMAILANGE SERVICE REQUESTED
#GMR0064167331/5#J/A13 0AALN
ERNE COURSON
2211 W BLUEFIELD AVE
PHOENIX AZ 85023-1214

PSRT STD
PAID
FUTURE US,
INC.



2ND PLACE IS LAST PLACE

(DON'T SUGARCOAT IT, n00b.)

BE FIRST.

REWARD ZONE® GAMERS CLUB [UNLOCKED] MEMBERS

GET \$20 in Reward Certificates for each select game you Pre-order and Purchase at Best Buy®.

FOR DETAILS, VISIT MYREWARDZONE.COM/GAMERSCLUB

To be eligible, you must be a Reward Zone program Gamers Club Unlocked member and meet minimum age requirements of purchased game at time of pickup or shipment. Visit MyRewardZone.com/gamersclub for list of eligible game titles, street dates, minimum age and other requirements. Street dates are subject to change by publisher. Offer valid at BestBuy.com and in Best Buy stores in 50 U.S./D.C. (excluding Puerto Rico). Game must be pre-ordered by street date and purchased as follows: (1) If you pre-order in-store or online for In-Store Pickup, purchase and pick up game within 7 days of street date; or (2) If you pre-order online for Ship to Home, your purchase will be processed and shipped on or about street date. Please provide Reward Zone member number at time of pre-order and pickup. Eligible Gamers Club Unlocked members will receive 1,000 Reward Zone points (worth \$20 Reward Certificate) per qualified purchase. Limit one award per member per title. Points will post to your account approximately 30 days from time of pickup or shipment. Follow instructions on MyRewardZone.com to issue your Reward Certificate. Reward Zone membership and Reward Certificates are subject to Reward Zone program rules. Gamers Club Unlocked subscriptions (\$14.99 per year) are available for purchase in Best Buy stores only. If you are not a Gamers Club Unlocked member at time of pre-order, you must join in-store prior to game pickup or shipment. If you join on day of in-store pickup, enrollment must be on the same transaction as game pickup and member number must be provided to be eligible. If you join after game pickup or shipment, you will not be eligible to receive an award for that title. No dealers. No rainchecks.

CE.

 | rewardzone
**GAMERS
CLUB**
[UNLOCKED]



In this ISSUE



Zombie Survival Guide

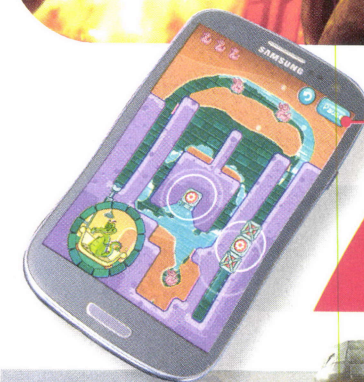
All of these games point to the inevitable zombie apocalypse—and luckily we have this nifty guide that will help you survive the hordes of undead!



48



COVER STORY



88

GEAR

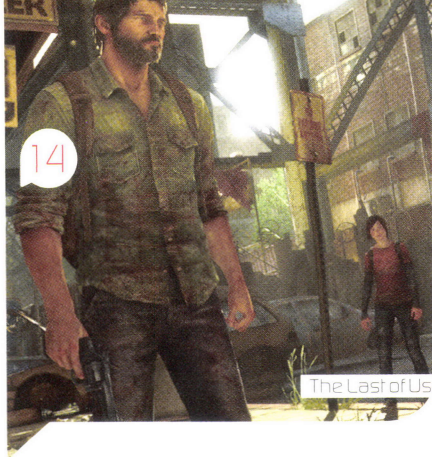
New gear is delicious, so we taste test it to make sure it isn't poisonous.



54

GAMES THAT CHANGED GAMING

You know all of those games that made you say, "Wow, has this awesome thing been done before?" Here are the ones that matter.



14

The Last of Us



20

StarCraft II:
Heart of the Swarm



66

Darksiders II



74

Tekken Tag
Tournament 2



80

The Amazing Spider-Man

NEWS: FIRST TO KNOW

04 STAFF

Who runs this jungle, anyway?

06 BLIPS

All the news that's fit to blip!

08 SHOW TIME

We infiltrate Comic-Con, EVO.

10 TABLET GAMES

You've got a tablet. We've got gaming expertise on tap.

12 CALENDAR

Release dates? Why, yes, we do have them.



GAME TIME

Top Picks

MADDEN NFL 13

62

Now more modern than ever with a realistic-yet-fake Twitter feed!

DARKSIDERS II

66

Death appears on the scene to redeem his brother, War. Will he succeed?

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

70

Coins. COINS EVERYWHERE. Is this good or bad?

SLEEPING DOGS

72

You know you won't be able to let them lie for very long. Besides, they got their paws on guns.

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

74

A dozen years later and they're still punching each other in the face.

TRANSFORMERS: FALL OF CYBERTRON

76

Robots in disguise destroy their own planet. Can't we all get along?

THE LAST STORY

78

Will this unique JRPG be enough to intrigue?

THE SECRET WORLD

79

Probably unlike any MMO you've ever played. Or not.

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

80

Is he really that amazing? Is he? Well, I don't see you climbing up walls and across ceilings.

FOUR MINI-REVIEWS!

82

Rhythm Thief & The Emperor's Treasure, Adidas miCoach, Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII, Persona 4 Arena

GOT FEEDBACK?

We want to hear it. Take this quick, easy survey to tell us what YOU think of @GAMER!



READER SURVEY:

<http://goo.gl/Rf9WG>

Previews

14 The Last of Us

Naughty Dog's newest endeavor features a post-apocalyptic world.

18 Beyond: Two Souls

A girl and her ghost star in this cinematic, supernatural epic.

20 StarCraft II: Heart of the Swarm

More upgrades, more units, more Zerg.

22 Call of Duty: Black Ops II

We go hands-on with multiplayer in Treyarch's near-future shooter.

26 Forza Horizon

The racing formula gets tweaked with action. Crashing encouraged.

28 ZombiU

Zombies are still cool, and these ones will make you frigid with fear.

30 007 Legends

Moonraker and five other Bond classics get a modern overhaul.

34 Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon

The other brother finally gets another game, this time on a handheld.

36 PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale

PlayStation characters get a chance to smash each other while brawling.

37 LEGO Lord of the Rings

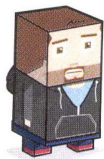
Say "LEGO Legolas" five times fast, we dare you.

38 Dishonored

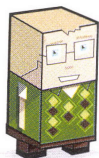
Get some revenge in this neo-Victorian, steampunk action game.



MEET THE STAFF



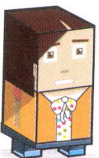
Charlie Barratt Executive Editor
Charlie takes pride in his magnificent beard, which competed in the 2011 national Extreme Ironing competition. It won first prize.



Ryan Taljonick Associate Editor
Ryan laments his inability to grow facial hair. To compensate, he dedicated his life to becoming the best underwater basket weaver the world's ever seen.



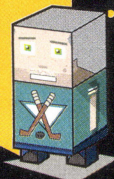
Jenny Esdaile Art Director
Jenny is from Australia, so she says funny things like "Ta!" and "Vegemite" on the reg. It's important to note Jenny has no interest in growing a beard.



Jillian Lungaro Designer
Jillian is in design heaven this issue as it's all about zombies...and Jillian is a zombie killer from way back. No, really, she wrote the book on this stuff.

Letter from the EDITOR

WELCOME TO



September is a time of change. Lots of kids go back to school, and much of the United States sees the weather start changing. Growing up in New York, I loved seeing the leaves change to bright reds, yellows, and oranges.

For many of us, though, the most welcome change comes in the world of gaming—where so many high-profile games will be appearing. This month's review pages show the start, with such games as *Darksiders II*, *Madden*, *New Super Mario Bros. 2*, *Sleeping Dogs*, and the latest *Transformers* getting graded. The next few issues will explode with even more killer releases.

Speaking of change, we're always looking for ways to tweak and tune @GAMER, so that it's the best game

magazine for you. If you can spare a few minutes, the staff and I certainly would appreciate it if you'd fill out our reader survey, which is located at <http://goo.gl/Rf9WG>. And, as always, thanks for reading @GAMER.

Andy Eddy
Editor-in-Chief

QR CODES AND HOW THEY WORK

Throughout the magazine you'll notice QR codes for some of the games. Simply install a QR reader for your smartphone (or install the Best Buy app for iPhone or Android), aim it at the QR code, and you'll be taken to a trailer for the game you just scanned.



Staff_



EDITORIAL

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Andy Eddy
EXECUTIVE EDITOR Charlie Barratt
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Ryan Taljonick
CONTRIBUTORS Matt Cabral, David Chapman, Hollander Cooper, Cheryl Del Rosario, Henry Gilbert, Gord Goble, Hilary Goldstein, Michael Grimm, Andrew Hayward, Heidi Kemp, William O'Neal, Susie Ochs, Chuck Osborn, Mikel Reparez, Ryan Scott, Matt Swider
COPY EDITOR Alexandra Hall
GROUP PRODUCTION MANAGER Debra Guilfoyle
EDITORIAL INTERN Casey DeFreitas

ART

ART DIRECTOR Jenny Esdaile
DESIGNERS Jillian Lungaro, Rosemary Pinkham
PHOTOGRAPHER Samantha Berg

BUSINESS

GROUP ACCOUNT DIRECTOR David Barrow
VP, MEDIA Ursula Morgan
VP, CONSUMER MEDIA Kelly Corten

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Brandie Rushing: brushing@futureus.com
T: 336 492 2265
VP, SALES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Nathan Hunt: nhunt@futureus.com
C: 415 269 5402
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF SALES
Isaac Ugay: iugay@futureus.com
C: 714 381 3419

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Michael Hollister
PRODUCTION MANAGER Larry Briseno
SENIOR PRINT ORDER COORDINATOR Jennifer Lim

CONSUMER MARKETING

CONSUMER MARKETING DIRECTOR Stephanie Blake
NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR Bill Shewey
NEWSSTAND BUSINESS ANALYST Cheryl Stephenson
DIRECTOR OF eCOMMERCE AND FULFILLMENT Lisa Radler
RETENTION MARKETING MANAGER Mike Hill

FUTURE US, INC.

4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400,
South San Francisco, CA 94080
www.futureus.com
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER Rachelle Considine
VP/COO John Sutton
HUMAN RESOURCES AND OFFICE SERVICES
MANAGER, Eric Buksa

BEST BUY CO., INC.

7601 Penn Avenue South
Richfield, Minnesota 55423
www.bestbuy.com

SUBSCRIBER CUSTOMER SERVICE:

@GAMER Customer Care, P.O. Box 5852, Harlan, IA 51593-1352. Online: www.atgamermagazine.com/customerservice. Phone: 800-678-3643. Email GMRcustserv@cdsfulfillment.com.

REPRINTS: Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Phone: (650) 872-1642. Fax: (650) 872-2207. Online: www.futureus.com.

LEGAL STUFF

@GAMER (ISSN 2160-469X) is published monthly, except bi-monthly in January/February and July/August, by Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080, USA. Basic subscription rates: one year (10 issues) US \$14.99. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to @GAMER, P.O. Box 5852, Harlan, IA 51593-1352. Future US, Inc. also publishes *Crochet Today!*, *MacLife*, *Maximum PC*, *Nintendo Power*, *The Official Xbox Magazine*, *PlayStation: The Official Magazine*, *PC Gamer*, and *Windows: The Official Magazine*. Entire contents copyright 2012, Future US, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction on the Internet of the articles and pictures in this magazine is illegal without the prior written consent of @GAMER. Products named in the pages of @GAMER are trademarks of their respective companies. PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

@GAMER is published in association with Best Buy.

FUTURE plc
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
www.futureplc.com / Tel +44 1225 442244
NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN Peter Allen
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE Mark Wood
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR Graham Harding

Write
to us!



PICS OF CONSTRUCTED BLOCKHEADS!



✎ I saw your tweet about sending in blockheads for free swags, so I thought I'd send you a pic. Here is a picture showing a few of my displayed blockheads! :)

—Lan Le. via email

ED: We (especially the art team!) love seeing constructed blockheads! We love art, too. So keep them coming, readers. Send us anything you would like...as long as it's rated E for everyone!

✎ So I noticed in the last issue you guys named *Diablo III* as the game of the month, even though it wasn't the highest-scoring game. To top it off, *Diablo III* got a blockhead papercraft instead of Medal of Honor: Warfighter. What's up with that?

—Jordan N. via email

ED: Wow, pretty observant! After some staff debate, we did switch

up our GotM selection from the highest-scoring game to one that scores well but also has a lot of impact, which is why *Diablo III* got the GotM nod. As for the *Diablo III* Papercraft—built by Jillian, our resident papercraft artisan—we opted to take a break from the “guy with gun” models that have dominated our papercraft pages for a few issues.

GAMING TRENDS, 140 CHARACTERS AT A TIME

Get more at @GAMER



RYAN TALJONICK TWITTER: @RYANTALJONICK

✎ What's up little goat kid—imma take a picture of you and sell it for \$500, cool? #BG&E



ANDY EDDY TWITTER: @VIDGAMES

✎ My job is the coolest when I find myself engrossed in an article that someone wrote for us...and I envision readers being as captivated.



CASEY DEFREITAS TWITTER: @SHINYCASEYD

✎ I need an intervention. I'm an awful, awful hoarder in *Skyrim*. I'm going to sell those bowls and disenchant all that stuff...Later!!



CHARLIE BARRATT TWITTER: @CHARLIEBARRATT

✎ Wanted: A game in which you're required to use the Power Glove, Power Pad, and Super Scope all at the same time.

Follow
us!



✎ When is the Wii U coming out? Online, a lot of the games for it are listed to come out “December 2012.” Is that true, or are they just saying that?

—Ryan K. via email

ED: Our best guess is that the Nintendo Wii U will be on sale late this year. Although last generation's consoles were all released in November, we can't say for sure if that's when the Wii U will be. But we will be covering the system and its new games in the coming months! Check out our preview for *ZombiU* on page 28 of this issue, and check back for more in the October issue.

✎ I live in Georgia, and San Diego is so far away! So of course I didn't go to Comic-Con. Any game-related news I should know from the show?

—Amanda B. via email

ED: Comic-Con has become a huge event not only for comic-related news and festivities, but for movies, TV, and videogames. Considering E3 was just a month earlier, there wasn't much fresh news, but there is some worth mentioning! Marvel is showing some love to Deadpool and is giving him his own game. And Capcom is giving Jojo's Bizarre Adventure, a quirky 2D fighting game, an HD makeover for Xbox Live and PSN. See page 8 for more news from Comic-Con.

✎ There was a survey about the mag posted on your Facebook. I did it, and I noticed a question about receiving @GAMER electronically. You aren't considering going only digital, are you?

—Frank F. via email

ED: At present, there are no plans to do away with the print version of @GAMER. Gamers love to share information, so until tablets are more prevalent, we figure there's still a place for the highly portable magazine.

BEST BUY CUSTOMER REVIEWS & RATINGS

WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY?

What are you playing? Do you like it? Do you hate it? Let other @GAMER readers know what you think—send in a 50- to 100-word review to reviews@atgamermagazine.com, and we'll post 'em in each issue.

Submit your review to:
reviews@atgamermagazine.com

DIABLO III

I've had a blast playing *Diablo III* solo and co-op with my wife. If you enjoyed *Diablo II* you'll enjoy this one, though it has its faults. Some design decisions are a step backward from the previous game's formula, and for that and other reasons I doubt it will have the same near-endless replayability. But don't get me wrong, it plays well and looks gorgeous, and you can still easily pour a hundred hours into this game. As long as you like clicking. A lot.

Score: 4.5/5
—Kristofer Z.

BEST
BUY

rewardzone

GAMERS
CLUB
[UNLOCKED]

We know you can't live without your monthly dose of @GAMER. Go to your local Best Buy and join the all-new Reward Zone Gamers Club Unlocked program for \$14.99 to get a full year's subscription and other exclusive benefits. Trust us, it's that easy.



Blips...

News, rumors, and game culture deconstructed

NEWS BITES

KATAMARI

Damacy is on display at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City as part of the Century of the Child: Growing by Design exhibit until Nov. 5.



STAR WARS

The Old Republic is going free-to-play this fall, with all eight characters playable up to level 50. Some restrictions will apply. Ready, are you?



ANGRY BIRDS

are flinging to a console near you. *Angry Birds Trilogy*, a compilation of the mobile games *Angry Birds*, *Angry Birds Seasons*, and *Angry Birds Rio*, is coming to PS3, Xbox 360, and Nintendo 3DS.



BEST BUY BONUS

DISHONORED

Pre-order *Dishonored* from Best Buy and get not only the Shadow Rat Downloadable Upgrade Pack, but also a physical Whale Oil USB Lamp! Note: Lamp not actually powered by whales.

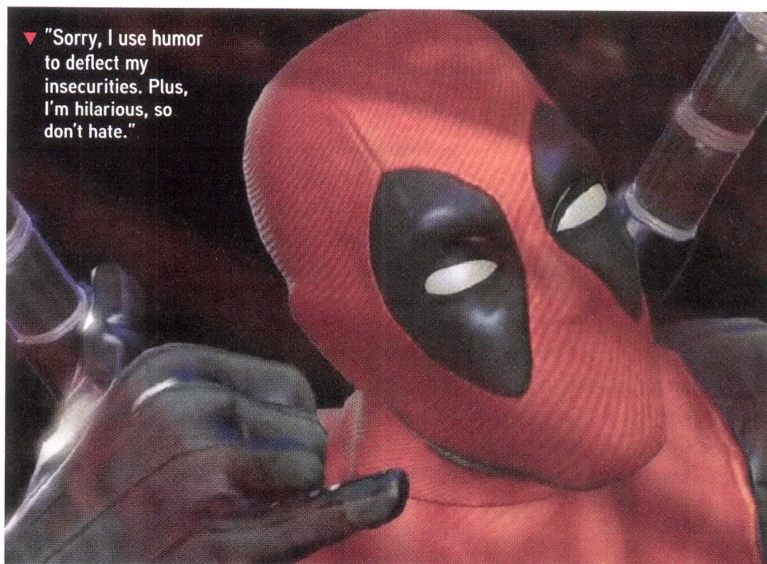


GET FIRED UP!

THE MERC WITH A GAME

DEADPOOL COMING IN 2013

▼ "Sorry, I use humor to deflect my insecurities. Plus, I'm hilarious, so don't hate."



Back in July, Comic-Con goers were met with a rather pleasant surprise. Just as the head of High Moon Studios started to unveil plans for a (fake) Hit-Monkey game during the Marvel Videogames panel, Deadpool rudely interrupted him and kicked him off stage. The masked mercenary then revealed that Hit-Monkey is, in fact, not getting a game—Deadpool is.

Simply titled *Deadpool*, the game will feature the type of adult humor fans of the comic love, though few details have been revealed. The game is sure to include lots of laughs and action, and with High Moon Studios (developers of the recent *Transformers* games) at the helm, we have little doubt that we're in for an enjoyable, if not mentally unstable, ride. ☺



THE RAPTR REPORT

What are the hottest games being played by Xbox 360 and PC gamers? Raptr.com has the answer.

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS



- 1 Minecraft
- 2 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
- 3 League of Legends
- 4 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 5 Battlefield 3
- 6 World of Warcraft
- 7 **Call of Duty: Black Ops**
- 8 Team Fortress 2
- 9 Halo: Reach
- 10 FIFA Soccer 12
- 11 Gears of War 3
- 12 Mass Effect 3
- 13 **Diablo III**
- 14 DOTA 2
- 15 Lost Saga

DIABLO III



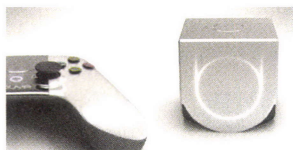
BUNDLE! HALO HEAVEN

For the Halo fans out there, Microsoft recently announced a limited-edition Xbox 360 bundle—available on Nov. 6 and priced at \$399.99—which includes a custom-designed Halo console with a 360GB hard drive, two Halo 4-themed controllers, an obligatory copy of the game, plus even more Halo 4 goodies. Also, Halo.

IN THE WORKS

Ooh Yeah! \\\

A new Kickstarter-funded console, called the OUYA, is in development. More than \$5 million has been raised for development costs, and the supposed Rubik's Cube-sized machine will cost \$99.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

VIGIL GAMES – AUSTIN, TEXAS

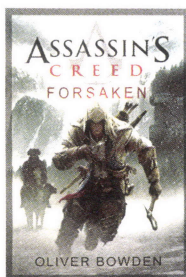


HOME BASE

Founded in 2005, Vigil Games (*Darksiders*) develops games under the THQ banner in Austin, Texas. Its freshman entry was well received, earning the company the opportunity to develop a sequel, *Darksiders II*.

NERD WORDS...

Connor's History



Sure, the Assassin's Creed novels don't have an audience as large as their videogame counterparts, but further backstory is always appreciated by the hardcore history fans. The fifth book, *Assassin's Creed: Forsaken*, features Connor and depicts how he became a deadly

killer. Oliver Bowden, Renaissance historian and writer of the past novels, will be penning this one as well, which is slated for release on December 4.

PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

Full Roster Leaked!

Files scored from the beta version of PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale seem to reveal the full roster of characters.

If the leaked info is to be believed, here's who you can choose to play as in Sony's brawler:



- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Big Daddy • BioShock | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parappa the Rapper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colonel Radec • Killzone | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parappa the Rapper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dante • Devil May Cry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Raiden • Metal Gear Solid |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evil Cole • Infamous | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ratchet • Ratchet & Clank |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fat Princess • Fat Princess | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sackboy • LittleBigPlanet |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good Cole • Infamous | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sir Daniel Fortesque • MediEvil |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heihachi • Tekken | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sly Cooper • Sly Cooper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jak • Jak & Daxter | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spike • Ape Escape |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nariko • Heavenly Sword | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sweet Tooth • Twisted Metal |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nathan Drake • Uncharted | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Toro Inoue • Sony Mascot |

Check out the preview on page 36!

Five Questions with...

CLAIM TO
FAME...
Designer of
Darksiders.



HAYDN DALTON

Lead designer of *Darksiders II*

1 How did you start your career as a developer?

I originally started off in the Commodore 64 demo scene doing graphics and designing demos with friends. I started doing animations for little games, and a few of my friends kept saying, "Why don't you send this stuff off to a games company?" I always thought that was something kind of out of reach. But when that kept coming up a lot as I kept on working, I thought, well, why not? I'll just try it. I got some graphics together and was offered a job on the spot.

2 What's the most challenging part of being a dev?

Getting what you consider to be the "core" of a game up and running as soon as possible. Once you get that rough shape, you know then what to take away, what to add. Getting all those functional systems working and working with each other.

3 Any advice for those wanting to break into the game-development scene?

Get involved in trying to understand your craft. The biggest thing we look for as developers is the reasoning for why people do things. If you get into the modding community and get to know some tools like Unreal, show creativity with those tools, but also be able to explain and describe why you've made the choices that you have. You'll get a lot of respect for that.

4 What excites you outside of gaming these days?

I've been trying to read a little bit more now that I've got a tablet. As for specific hobbies outside games: watching movies and hanging out with friends.

5 What are some of your favorite videogames?

One of my favorite games of all time is *Ico*—I love *Ico*. I'm also a massive fan of *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. When I first saw that and I saw what they did to transition *Zelda* from the 2D world to the 3D world, it literally blew me away.

COMIC-CON 2012



Bam! Pow! Check out everything you missed from this geekstravaganza • Words: Hollander Cooper

Comic-Con was giant-sized this year, packed with gargantuan game, comic, television, and movie news. And cosplayers—oh, so many cosplayers.

Marvel's movie division stole the show, revealing information on sequels to all of its big franchises and confirming work on a few new super-powered properties, while DC displayed some of the first footage for *The Man of Steel*, which is shaping up to fill the Superman-shaped void left in our hearts.

The coolest game news was undoubtedly the reveal of the M-rated *Deadpool* game. The "Merc with a Mouth" is being brought to life by High Moon Studios, the developers behind the recent *Transformers* games, so there's a good chance it'll knock our speech bubbles clean off when it releases in 2013.

There was obviously plenty more, including awesome costumes, cool toys, and fantastic panels for all things pop culture, but you'll need to attend the show yourself to see just how amazing it really is.



▲ **IT'S THRILLER TIME**
No shambling corpses were harmed during the yearly zombie walk.



▲ Lots of skin was on display at this year's SDCC.



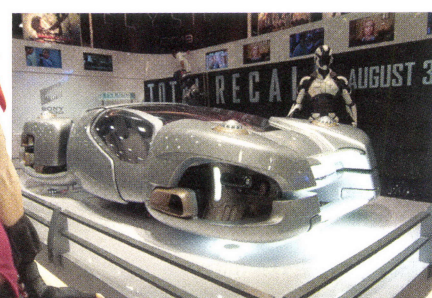
▲ Incredible (and incredibly rare) toys and collectibles littered the showfloor.



Galactus Noms Planets
Fun fact: Galactus and Harley Quinn? They're BFFs!



▲ Big Boss and Snake put aside their differences for a photo op.



▲ Movies are just as big as comics and games at SDCC.



EVO

2012

The
biggest,
baddest
brawl of all

• Words: Heidi Kempes

Thanks to broadband Internet connections, gamers can administer beatdowns in their favorite fighting games online. But the most devoted players will tell you that there's no substitute for face-to-face competition—and the biggest gathering is the yearly Evolution Championship Series (EVO) tournament held at Caesar's Palace on the Las Vegas strip. Thousands of international fighting-game fans travel to EVO to put their skills to the test for cash prizes and a shot at the title of world champion. But there's also a down-home, community feel to the event. Companies such as Mad Catz and Capcom have elaborate demo/sales booths, but you'll also find kiosks of controller modders and game-themed clothing designers.

THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR FACE-TO-FACE COMPETITION

Six primary games were featured at this year's three-day event: *Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition Version 2012*, *King of Fighters XIII*, *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Soulcalibur V*, and *Street Fighter X Tekken*. Two popular downloadable titles—*Virtua Fighter 5 Final Showdown* and *Skullgirls*—were also featured in side tournaments, and a retro-themed *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* competition drew a large crowd. As the competition narrowed down, the showroom transformed into a spectator hall where players watched the drama of the final matches play out with stunning comebacks and amazing feats of fighting skill. ➤

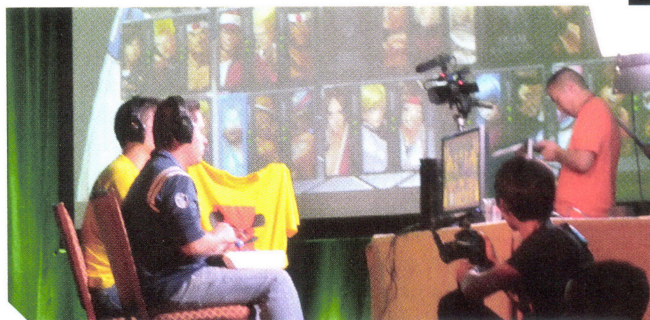
Finish Them!

FIGHT FRENZY!

EVO is a showcase of the love and dedication that makes the fighting-game community unique.



▲ Capcom fans drooled over the impressive *Street Fighter* 25th Anniversary Collector's Set. *Shoryuken!*



▲ The top tournament players take their fights seriously—they use noise-cancelling headphones to stay focused.



Words: Susie Ochs



Featured Game:

DRIVE TIME

Realistic racing with loads of licensed rides and tracks from around the globe.



ASPHALT 7: HEAT

Platforms:

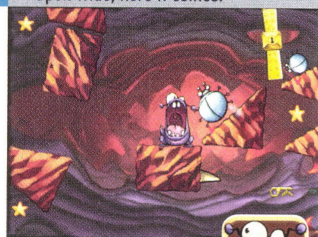
\$0.99, Gameloft, gameloft.com



Realistic racing games shine on tablets, and not many games are more realistic than the Asphalt series. Heat brings 60 licensed cars, including Ferraris, Audis, and Aston Martins. They race around 15 detailed tracks, with gorgeously lit renditions of locales such as Miami, Hawaii, and Rio. But you'll hardly notice the scenery since you're so engrossed in the fluid steering and white-knuckle speed. It supports up to six-player multiplayer either locally or online, and the new Asphalt Tracker system lets you challenge friends and compare stats—and with 150 races spread across six game modes, there are a lot of stats to track. But if you can't stand the Heat, stay off the asphalt.

Just whipping around Shanghai in my Aston Martin, NBD.

▼ Open wide, here it comes.



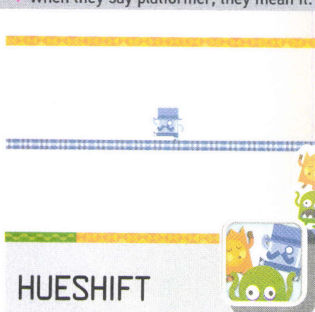
MONSTAAA!



Platforms:
\$0.99, Pixel Elephant, pixelelephant.com

Physics puzzlers, such as Cut the Rope and Angry Birds, get really, really popular for a reason: They're simple to learn, challenging to play, and highly addictive. Monstaaa! sets itself apart from the field with tilt controls—just keep moving your device to change the game world's gravity, and work the bugs down past the obstacles and game-ending traps into the cute little monster's gaping maw.

▼ When they say platformer, they mean it.



HUESHIFT



Platforms:
\$0.99, Josef Ortner, hueshiftgame.com

This game takes the term "platformer" seriously: You are a little monster-like character leaping from platform to platform, only to land on a platform you must be the same color as it, so you're constantly switching between the three colors. The randomly generated levels let you jump your heart out while avoiding enemies, hazards, and the unthinkable sin of not matching.

▼ The Squid, the Whale...and the Robot.



OUTWITTERS



Platforms:
Free, One Man Left, onemanleft.com

Battle 1-on-1 or 2-on-2 in this multiplayer-only turn-based strategy game, either online or in person with pass-the-device play. You'll command your adorable troops across hex-based boards trying to destroy the enemy base, even if your enemies are cute widdle teddy bears. Play against Game Center friends, or join the tournament to be matched to foes of similar skill for some cartoon mayhem.

▼ Corn never says die.



CORN QUEST



Platforms:
\$0.99, Namco Bandai, namcobandaigames.com

The little corn soldiers in this tower-defense game have so much personality, you feel like you're playing through a Pixar movie. Five unit types faithfully march to defend their (lushly imagined, brightly colored) cornfield in Campaign, Survival, and Sudden Death mode, and the real-time gameplay is a good mix of defense and blow-the-bugs-away action.

▼ There's a new sheriff in town.



SQUIDS WILD WEST

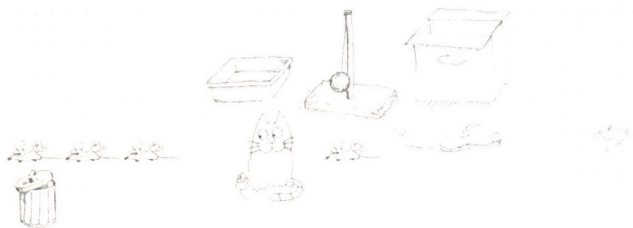
Platforms:

\$1.99, The Game Bakers, thegamebakers.com



If the western U.S. were covered by water at one time, we doubt any squids there were quite this tough. This RPG looks casual, with gun-toting cartoon squids, but it's surprisingly deep, with tons of missions, tough boss battles, four classes, and lots of ability-boosting items. But the squid-flinging controls are nice and simple, saving the complexity for where it helps instead of hurts.

▼ I'm in ur tablet, frolicking on ur screen.



DOODLE CAT

Platforms:

Free, Mail.Ru, doodlecat.mail.ru



You have a little cartoon cat, and all you want is for him to be happy. So, you pet him and he meows and purrs, and those meows and purrs can be combined to form objects that he can play with. Those objects later make better objects, and before you know it, hours have gone by and your Doodle Cat loves you, but your family is starving. It's that kind of game.



You'll reminisce about flashbacks of olde...

RETRO STYLE

Who needs the fountain of youth when a few bucks in your favorite app store can bring back the nostalgia of your favorite old-school games—or new games that just look like them.

OLD SKOOL



01 REALMYST (\$6.99, cyanworlds.com)

Myst got quite a facelift for its debut on the iPad, with gorgeous 3D environments rendering in real-time as you explore the world on your first-person adventure.



02 WARLORDS CLASSIC HD (\$2.99, bit.ly/warlordshd)

If you spent hours and hours playing *Warlords* on your PC, Mac, or (giggle) Amiga, you'll feel right at home. This is strategy at its purest, unflinchingly faithful to the original.



03 CENTIPEDE: ORIGINS (\$0.99, atari.com)

Atari's classic bug-blaster is reimagined as a gnomes-versus-insects total war: You can upgrade your weapons, launch grenades, and set gadget traps—oh, yeah...and kill bugs dead.



04 BIO CRISIS (\$2.99, sphinxjoy.com)

Run and gun your way through 36 missions complete with a cheesy story line. Blast everything in sight while dodging bullets, hiding, and moving in close for stealth knife kills.



05 FROGGER: HYPER ARCADE EDITION

(\$0.99, konami.com)

Which way will you hop...to the past, with classic *Frogger* levels in their pixelated glory, or to the future, with glowing, space-age designs? This game has both.



06 MARATHON INFINITY (free, marathon4ios.com)

Bungie's mid-'90s first-person shooter trilogy is still a high point of the genre, and this port of the third game brings you the full Macintosh gameplay (even the manual) for free, or chip in \$1.99 for a graphics upgrade.



07 GALAGA 30TH COLLECTION (free, namcogames.com)

Does it make you feel old to hear top-down arcade shooter *Galaga* is 30 years old? Well, too bad, because it also means we get a free remake of *Galaxian*, with in-app purchases available for three other classic *Galaga* games.



08 ATARI'S GREATEST HITS (free, atari.com)

If you don't play Atari, I feel bad for you, son. It's got 99 classic Atari games...uh, plus one. You get *Missile Command* for free, then you can unlock four-packs for 99 cents each, or all 100 games for \$9.99.



09 DUKE NUKEM 3D (\$0.99, machineworksnorthwest.com)

Faithful down to the blocky, pixelated graphics, this first-person shooter hits all the right buttons for serious nostalgia, although the touch-screen control scheme can take some getting used to.



10 GRIDRUNNER (\$0.99, llamasoft.com)

This looks just like a coin-op arcade game (actually, it was huge on the Commodore 64), but the top-down shooting action is as fast-paced as any modern take on the genre.

SEPTEMBER 2012

It's National Chicken Month!

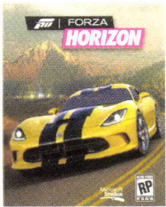
■ Game Release Date ■ The @GAMER Podcast ▸ This day in videogame history...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30  ▸ 1996—BioWare releases its first game, <i>Shattered Steel</i> .	 The Sims 3 Supernatural	OCTOBER 2012 HIGHLIGHTS: Resident Evil 6: 10/2 Pokémon Black / White 2: 10/7 Dishonored: 10/9 Forza Horizon: 10/23 Medal of Honor Warfighter: 10/23 Assassin's Creed III: 10/30	ARE YOU A PRE-ORDER PRO? If you want to keep tabs on all of the pre-order specials that Best Buy and game publishers have put together, just scan this QR code with your smartphone. One webpage will tell all! 	01		
02  ISSUE 22 ON SALE	03 LABOR DAY	04 ■ The Sims 3 Supernatural ▸ 1989—The <i>Super Mario Bros. Super Show!</i> begins, and new episodes are produced for all of three months. The series is later picked up by The Family Channel.	05 ■ The Lord of the Rings Online: Riders of Rohan	 LOTR Online: Riders of Rohan	06 ■ THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 46	07
09 ▸ 1995—Sony's PlayStation lands on retailer shelves in North America.	10	11 ■ NBA Baller Beats ■ NHL 13 ■ Tekken Tag Tournament 2 ■ The Testament of Sherlock Holmes	12 ▸ 1958—Jack Kilby demonstrates the integrated circuit, making the technology we have today possible.	13 ▸ 1993—The bloody <i>Mortal Kombat</i> comes to consoles, causing moral panic around the world.	 NHL 13	14 
16 ■ Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition  ROSH HASHANAH	17	18 ■ Borderlands 2 ■ Street Fighter: 25th Anniversary Collector's Set ■ Thundercats	 Borderlands 2		20	21  ■ THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 47
23 ▸ 1889—Nintendo—originally a producer of playing cards—is founded. The company wouldn't venture into the world of videogames until 1974.	24	25 ■ Dead or Alive 5 ■ Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse ■ FIFA Soccer 13	 Dead or Alive 5		27 	28
						29 ▸ 1996—The Nintendo 64 comes to North America, inspiring many to scream its name in ecstasy upon receiving one.

ALL GAME NAMES ARE LISTED ON THEIR RESPECTIVE RELEASE DATES. LISTINGS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. FOR MORE INFO, GO TO BESTBUY.COM TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE @GAMER PODCAST, GO TO ATGAMERPODCAST.COM

Pre-Order Exclusives

▼ Check out these special offers on upcoming games, available by pre-ordering now!



FORZA HORIZON

Publisher: Microsoft
Developers: Playground Games,
Turn 10 Studios
Release Date: October 23, 2012



It's powerful, manly, and oh-so-pretty in pink. Pre-order Forza Horizon from Best Buy and get a code for a free download of the 2012 Dodge Challenger SRT8 392 all decked out with a Horizon theme.

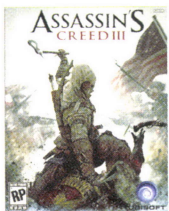
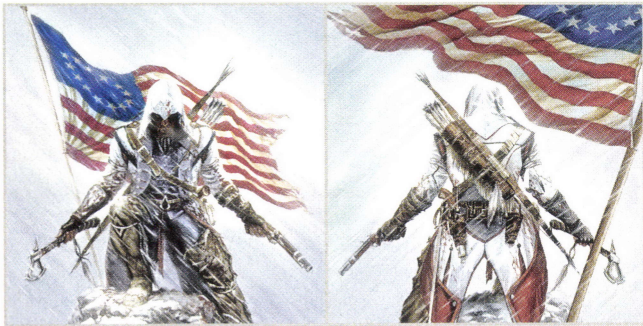


PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SuperBot
Release Date: October 23, 2012



Make your peers envious by having more options in your closet! Pre-order PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale from Best Buy and get alternate costumes for all playable characters. Now Big Daddy can drill Sweet Tooth's sweet tooth in a flashy outfit!



ASSASSIN'S CREED III

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Release Date: October 30, 2012



Pre-order Assassin's Creed III on PS3 or Xbox 360 and get a free SteelBook collectible case featuring artwork by award-winning comic artist Alex Ross. You'll receive the exclusive "Ghost of War" single-player mission and the Pontiac's War Club weapon!



HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: IO Interactive
Release Date: November 20, 2012



Assassinate in style by pre-ordering from Best Buy! You'll get a swanky Public Enemy gangster suit and the Bronson M1928, a submachine gun with a high rate of fire. Not your stealthiest option, but a deadly one.



THE LAST OF US

Seeking a friend for the end of the world • Words: Charlie Barratt

Another apocalypse? Really? The struggle for survival after the end of the world has become so common in games these days that it's practically its own genre. If you're worried developers at Naughty Dog will fall into clichéd formulas with *The Last of Us*, however, you shouldn't be. Take the setting, which forgoes a dusty brown sci-fi wasteland for the city of Pittsburgh—yes, Pittsburgh—as reclaimed by a vibrant green jungle of vines and trees. Or the enemies, which predictably include violent scavengers and mutated zombies, but unpredictably react with fear when you point a gun in their direction, and are partially inspired by fungus-infected ants from the BBC documentary *Planet Earth*. Really.

"We wouldn't do this unless we had something interesting to say that no one has done yet in games," explains creative director Neil Druckmann. That design philosophy extends to the heroes in *The Last of Us* as well. While playable protagonist Joel may resemble an older Nathan Drake, comparisons to the star of Naughty Dog's previous franchise *Uncharted* stop there. Joel's no superhuman with a winning smile and taste for adventure—he's just a regular guy trying to live one more day, even if doing so requires dealing drugs, selling weapons on the black market, or smashing an attacker's

head open with a nearby brick (hey, ammunition is scarce in the post-apocalypse).

His AI-controlled companion, Ellie, is no sexy sidekick or damsel-in-distress, either. A teenage kid born in the years since society collapsed, she reacts to the danger and horror around her like anyone her age would: with fear, disgust, an endless line of questions, and eventually, courage. During my demo, Ellie hid at times, but created a distraction for Joel or even fought enemies off by herself at other times.

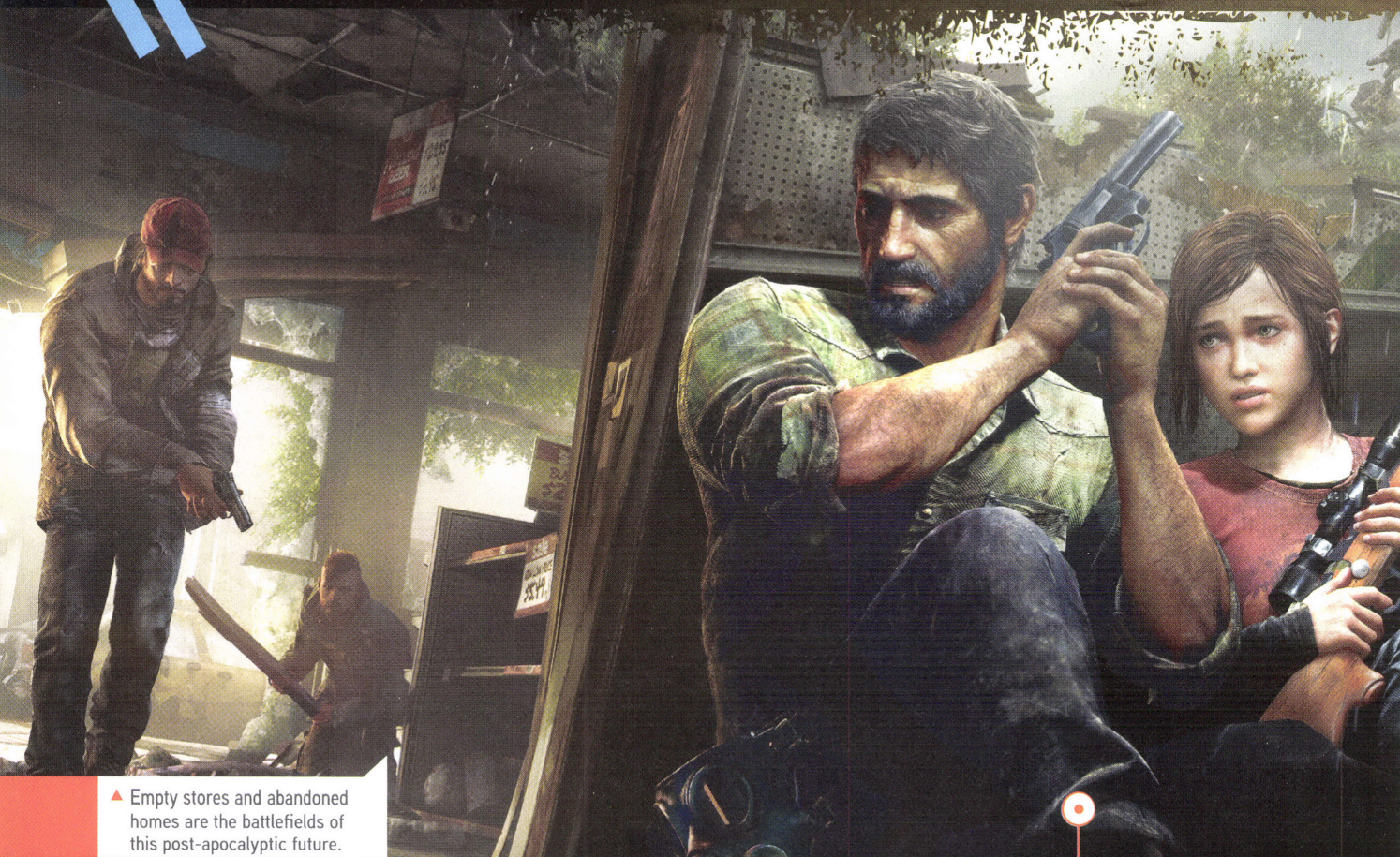
Naughty Dog hired Mark Richard Davies, the lead designer of 2010's over-looked *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West*, to work on *The Last of Us*—and it shows, in both the game's beautifully ravaged environments and its believably depicted, organically growing relationship between two very different yet instantly relatable people.

As Druckmann points out, "When you look at film or comics or any other medium that deals with this content, it's all about the characters. With games, no one is approaching it from [that angle]. It's all campy, over-the-top, gratuitous violence." Yes, *The Last of Us* is another zombie-swarmed survival shooter, and oh, yes, it's plenty violent (see: brick), but buried amidst the crazy fungi and extreme destruction is something simpler, though much harder to program. Humanity and heart. ☺

**BURIED
AMIDST THE
DESTRUCTION
IS HUMANITY
AND HEART**



▼ Survivors Ellie and Joel start their journey in what's left of Pittsburgh, then trek across a ravaged America.

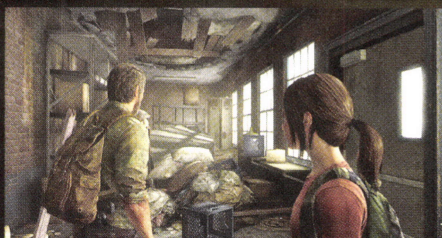
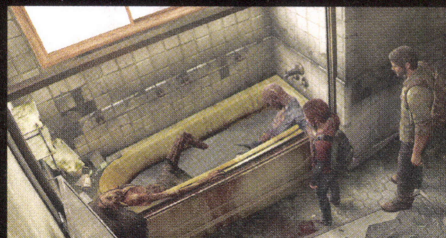
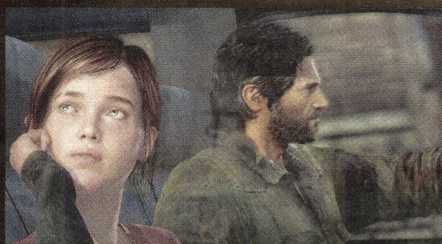


▲ Empty stores and abandoned homes are the battlefields of this post-apocalyptic future.

**SCHOOL'S OUT FOR...EVER ** Don't worry about Ellie. Although Joel promised a dying friend that he'd help her escape Pittsburgh's quarantine zone, he's not her babysitter and the game won't require you to hold her hand through every area. From what I've experienced, she's a smart and capable AI that knows when to run away, when to split up and surprise the enemy from behind, or when to grow up and grab a gun. Hmm, maybe we should worry about Ellie after all.

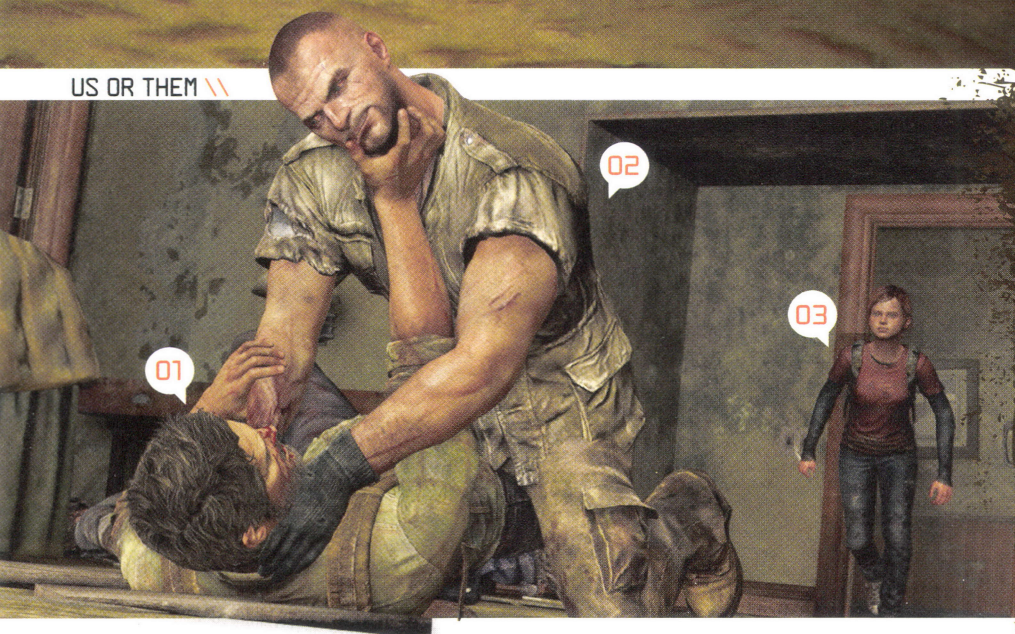
CORNERED

Every encounter truly feels like a life-or-death moment in which Joel and Ellie could easily lose.



TOO REAL \\\

The Last of Us worried me during my first demo. As Joel and Ellie struggled with a band of scavengers in a hotel, the combat appeared so impressively improvised—from shooting to brawling to stealth to teamwork to the crafting of home-made molotov cocktails, all within a matter of minutes—that I had to believe it was scripted. Ironic, no? When I saw this same sequence played for a second time, however, events unfolded in a completely different way. Joel used new weapons, Ellie resorted to new tactics, and enemies reacted in new ways. It looked too real to be true, but was.

**01 THE HERO**

Joel knows how to fight, but with so few weapons in the world, it can get down and dirty.

02 THE ENEMY

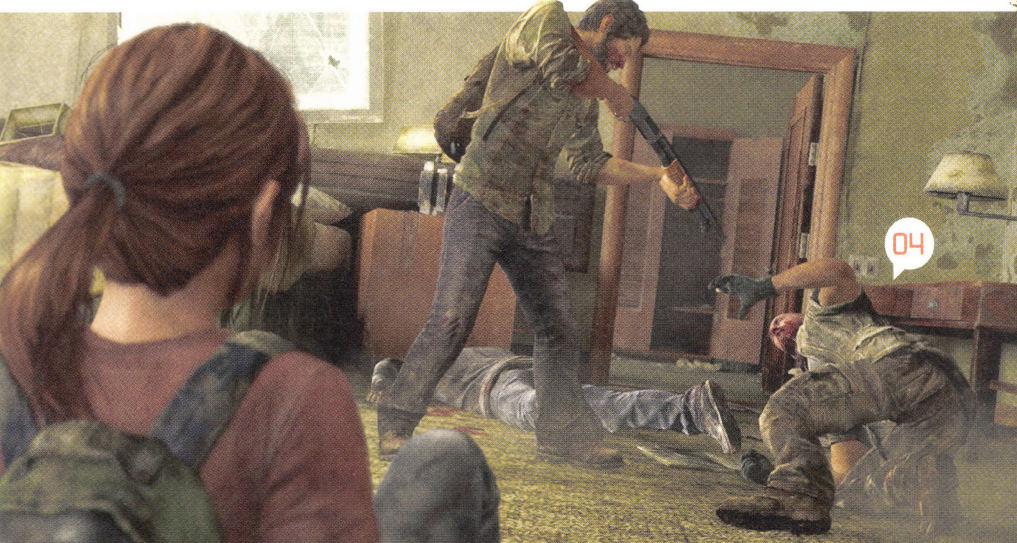
Hunters are scavengers who will kill you for supplies. Hey, at least they're not zombies!

03 THE SIDEKICK

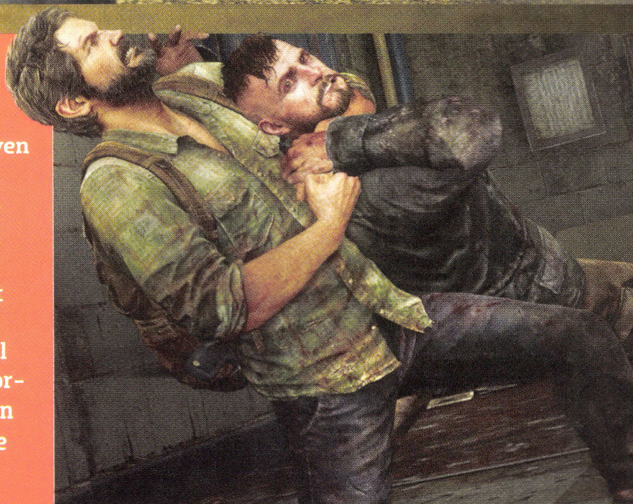
Ellie is 14 years old. She'll help in combat, though—that knife in her hand isn't for show.

04 THE TWIST

Bad guys are only human and might beg for their lives or run away when defeated.

**MULTI MYSTERY **

As strange as it sounds for such a gritty, character-driven tale of survival, *The Last of Us* will feature multiplayer... and not campaign co-op as you might guess. Naughty Dog's withholding details at the moment, but an online war for ammo between rival scavenger gangs or a less forgiving, more realistic take on *Call of Duty's* Zombies mode could fit the game's tone.



PS3

GAME DETAILS

FIRST LOOK

**THE LAST OF US****INFO**

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Naughty Dog
Platforms: PS3

RELEASE DATE

2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Yes; details TBA

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Apocalyptic refugees starving for a fresh take on the genre

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Uncharted is in this game's



DNA, but so is the lesser-known, equally enjoyable *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West*.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *The Last of Us*.

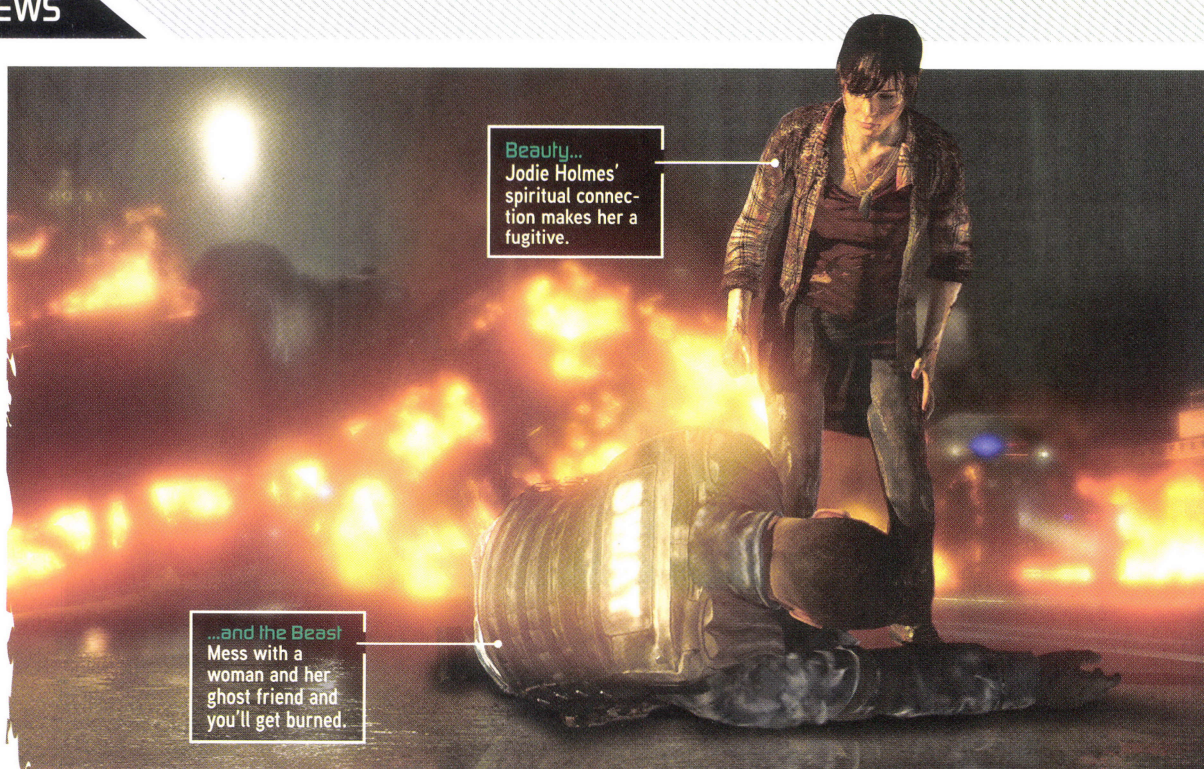
**WHAT'S GREAT:**

- ♥ Playing as very relatable characters who struggle to survive in very realistic ways
- ♥ Also, zombies. Fungus-brained zombies

**WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:**

- ✗ The game's violence looks so brutal you may feel guilty for taking part

STNOS OMN: TWO SOULS BEYOND: JODIE HOLMES



Beauty...
Jodie Holmes' spiritual connection makes her a fugitive.

...and the Beast
Mess with a woman and her ghost friend and you'll get burned.

Quantic Dream's follow-up to *Heavy Rain* goes supernatural • Words: Ryan Taljorick


Growing up is hard. There are all sorts of things to deal with: bullies, teenage hormones, ghosts. You know, the usual. Okay, so maybe ghosts aren't that common—unless you're Jodie Holmes, the protagonist of Quantic Dream's upcoming *Beyond: Two Souls*. Like *Heavy Rain*, Quantic Dream's last title, *Beyond* is a sort of interactive drama that's more about narrative than it is about action. The game spans 15 years of Jodie's life, detailing her co-existence with a ghostly pal named Aiden, and how that relationship affects her. It's a deeply mature and personal story enriched by your gameplay decisions. There is no "game over," no second chances. Every choice you make is a permanent one that will send ripples through the overarching tale.

"It's not about succeeding or failing—it's about what you do, what you decide, what you choose," says David Cage, founder of Quantic Dream. "You will have consequences in your life. You will also discover about Aiden, this entity, but also about what's on the other side, because this game is also about death...about what will happen to us when we die."

The gameplay in *Beyond* is similar to *Heavy Rain*'s, as Jodie and Aiden rely on QTE-like prompts to interact

with the world and the people in it, and you'll control both characters at certain times in the game. In my hour-long demo, Jodie was branded a fugitive (those pesky government agents know about her invisible friend) and spent a lot of time avoiding capture. Here, the game was fairly open. During a chase sequence in a dark forest, Jodie ran from the cops and could move in just about any direction. Upon finding a small cliff, she climbed to the top of the precipice to freedom—and while she ultimately escaped her pursuers, this scene could've played out very differently. Cage tells me she could've been caught and arrested, which would've altered the story's progression.

When in control of Aiden, however, *Beyond* became a puzzler comparable to *Ghost Trick*, as Aiden interacted with characters and the environment to protect Jodie from harm. The spirit can tamper with inanimate objects and can even possess enemies temporarily, using its human vessels to distract or engage hostiles.

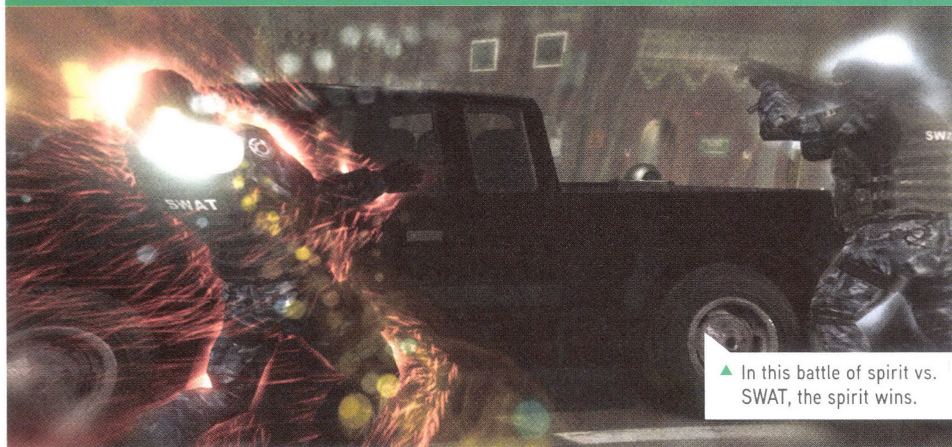
Beyond won't appeal to everyone, as it appears to be more "video" than "videogame"—but according to Cage, that's kind of the point. "I'll make you forget that this is a game," he says. "I want you to just forget about everything and just be with Jodie Holmes." 

IT'S A DEEPLY MATURE AND PERSONAL STORY
ENRICHED BY YOUR GAMEPLAY DECISIONS



MAN ON FIRE \\\

In the scene below, Aiden must incapacitate SWAT forces before they can put a bullet in Jodie's head. There are many ways to approach this situation, as hostiles can be taken out by manipulating objects in the environment, or by possessing them outright. Aiden does have some freedom of movement, but he (she? it?) can never move too far away from Jodie's position. And that dude on the left? He found out the hard way that being possessed by an angry spirit isn't so fun.



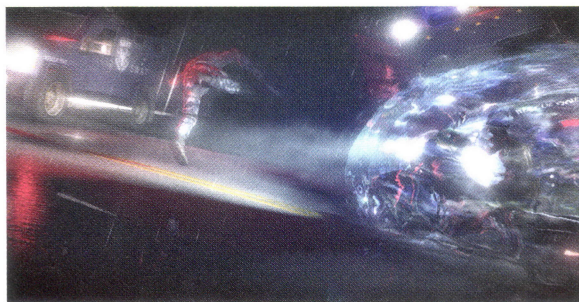
▲ In this battle of spirit vs. SWAT, the spirit wins.



\\ ON THE RUN



▲ Tip: Wearing a hoodie can keep your head warm.



▲ While sometimes a nuisance, Aiden seems to have Jodie's back. Here, the spirit acts as a giant shield against gunfire.



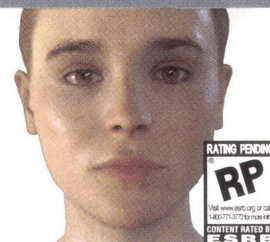
LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION \\\

Jodie's movements and facial expressions are modeled after motion-captured footage of actress Ellen Page. The character's animations are some of the most lifelike I've ever seen.

PS3

GAME DETAILS

FIRST LOOK



BEYOND: TWO SOULS

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Quantic Dream
Platforms: PS3

RELEASE DATE

TBD 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Interactive drama

SUITABLE FOR

Lovers of ghost stories,
Shenmue cultists

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



One of Quantic Dream's earlier games, *Indigo Prophecy*, is a fun interactive mystery with a sci-fi twist.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Beyond: Two Souls*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Huge emphasis on telling a supernatural story
- ♥ Amazing motion-capture technology



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Will it be another QTE-fest like *Heavy Rain*?

▼ The Zerg theme of this expansion means that you'll be sending Protoss units, like this ship, on the run.

STARCRAFT II: HEART OF THE SWARM

Get ready to adapt, evolve, and mutate like never before • Words: Malt Swider

Blizzard is taking our desire for more units to heart in the Zerg-focused expansion of its sci-fi real-time strategy game. The campaign mode's 20 missions star former Queen of Blades Sarah Kerrigan, who, with new and old mutations under her command, is bent on regaining control of her greater Swarm.

Helping her along the way is a new Zerg-only ability called Genetic Splits, which allows units to transform into entirely new creatures. Zerglings, for example, can become either Raptors or Swarmlings. Raptor mutations give the notorious ground units wings, with which they can then leap into combat and launch sneaky assaults on enemy strongholds from the heights of a nearby cliff. Swarmlings, meanwhile, spawn three Zerglings at a time instead of just a pair and reduce the build time from 15 seconds to a lightning-fast two.

Multiplayer won't see these specific upgrades, but will feature new units for all races to compensate. Zerg players can burrow as Swarm Hosts, a siege unit that

releases an endless supply of small Locusts. These are paired best with Vipers, which pull individual enemies out of their group and toward your all-consuming Zerg horde.

Terrans, on the other hand, take to the battlefield with vehicle-targeting mech Warhounds and flamethrower-equipped Battle Hellions. Back at the base, they can defend themselves with Widow Mines, which attach to the first detected enemy and, after 10 torturous seconds, explode for a massive amount of damage.

Of course, Blizzard didn't forget about the Protoss. Its most impressive new unit is the Tempest, a harassment ship with a huge maximum firing range, easily topping the already-large reach of Terran Siege Tanks. Their Oracle unit is also a nuisance, with an Entomb ability that temporarily blocks enemy mineral fields.

With a game as complex as this sci-fi RTS, proper tuning is absolutely essential for balanced gameplay—so while I eagerly await *Heart of the Swarm*, I'd rather Blizzard not "Zerg rush" to push it out. ☹

► Zerg characters like Izsha will play a major role in the single-player campaign.

GENETIC SPLITS \\\

The Evolution Pit is where you can mutate units three times, at which point a Genetic Split will become the next available upgrade. This transforms the unit into one of two entirely new entities. Luckily, you'll be able to test drive both in evolutionary missions.



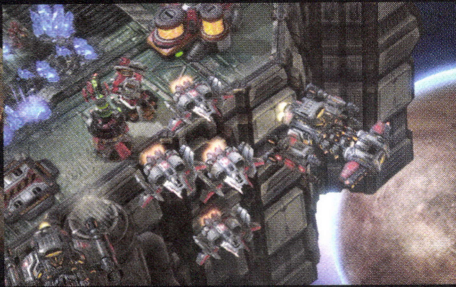
▼ Abathur is Kerrigan's key to Zerg evolution. She turns to him and the Evolution Pit to upgrade units.

SARAH KERRIGAN \\\

The former Queen of Blades and series enemy, Sarah Kerrigan, returns as the heroine throughout the story mode in *StarCraft II: Heart of the Swarm*. She can be upgraded with both Zerg and ghost abilities over the course of the campaign's 20 missions, presenting new gameplay elements.



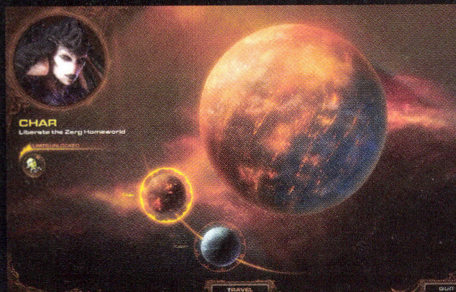
OLD MEETS NEW \\\



▲ Terrans, the focus of the previous game, will feature familiar units like Battlecruisers and Vikings.



▲ The humans also boast new units like the Widow Mine and Battle Hellion, both built in the Factory.



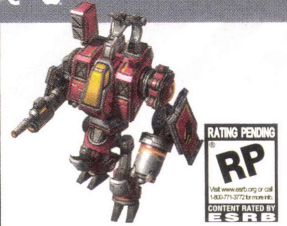
▲ Explore planets both new and old as Sarah Kerrigan, including the Zerg homeworld of Char.

MULTIPLAYER UPGRADES \\\

In addition to new units like Swarm Hosts, Warhounds, and Tempests, this expansion upgrades existing Zerg units. The Hydralisks get a much-needed speed boost that makes them nimble on and off the creep. Ultralisks can skip the creep and terrain altogether with a Burrow Charge ability, which allows the mammoth-like creature to dig and rise quicker, gaining the upper hand in battle.

PC

GAME DETAILS



STARCRAFT II: HEART OF THE SWARM

INFO

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Platforms: PC, Mac

RELEASE DATE

TBA

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online

GENRE

Real-time strategy

SUITABLE FOR

Micro-managing zealots, strategy-minded entymologists

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Check out *StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty*, the first game, which is required for this expansion.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *StarCraft II: Heart of the Swarm*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Zerg Genetic Splits introduce even more choice to the campaign mode
- ♥ Exciting new multiplayer units for all three races



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Requires a copy of *StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty* to play
- ✗ Still no LAN support for multiplayer



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

MULTI-
PLAYER
PREVIEW

Get ready...here comes your new major time suck • Words: Andy Eddy

If there's one thing you can count on from a Call of Duty game, it's that the multiplayer action will be intense and deep. Activision and Treyarch carry the online torch in a big way with the forthcoming Call of Duty: Black Ops II—and in fact go a few extra miles to freshen up the formula a bit.

The emphasis in Black Ops II's multiplayer is on what warfare will be like in the year 2025, so there are plenty of new weapons and gear—all with a futuristic tilt. Among them are the Guardian, a

equip any combination of equipment and abilities. This new system will certainly allow for some pretty wild combinations, and it will assure that everyone has a level playing field. You can play your character however you want.


One of the coolest additions, though, is a built-in toolset for Shoutcasting games, which should jazz those interested in participating in eSports leagues and competitions. The demo I had ran smoothly, as the commentator was able to look at an overhead map and quickly switch to a

THE CREATE A CLASS SYSTEM ALLOWS FOR WILD COMBINATIONS

force-field-like turret that offers "ground control"; and the Millimeter Scanner, which enables you to see through smoke and detect stationary people through walls.

One of the key changes Treyarch made to Black Ops II multiplayer has to do with the Create-a-Class system. Here, you'll have a set number of equipment points (in place of strict slots for weapons and gear), used to set up your loadout. Every gun, grenade, and perk soaks up a certain number of points from your pool—so long as you don't exceed the limit, you can

player's view where the action was while keeping up the play-by-play. All you'll need to Shoutcast is sufficient upstream bandwidth; a USB webcam is optional. And for spectators, Black Ops II will also enable viewing the Shoutcasted action—with a 30-second delay to prevent cheating—on a mobile device, such as an iPad.

There's still a lot that the game's makers haven't revealed—including details of the requisite Zombies mode—but FPS fans should already be excited by what's been shown to this point. 



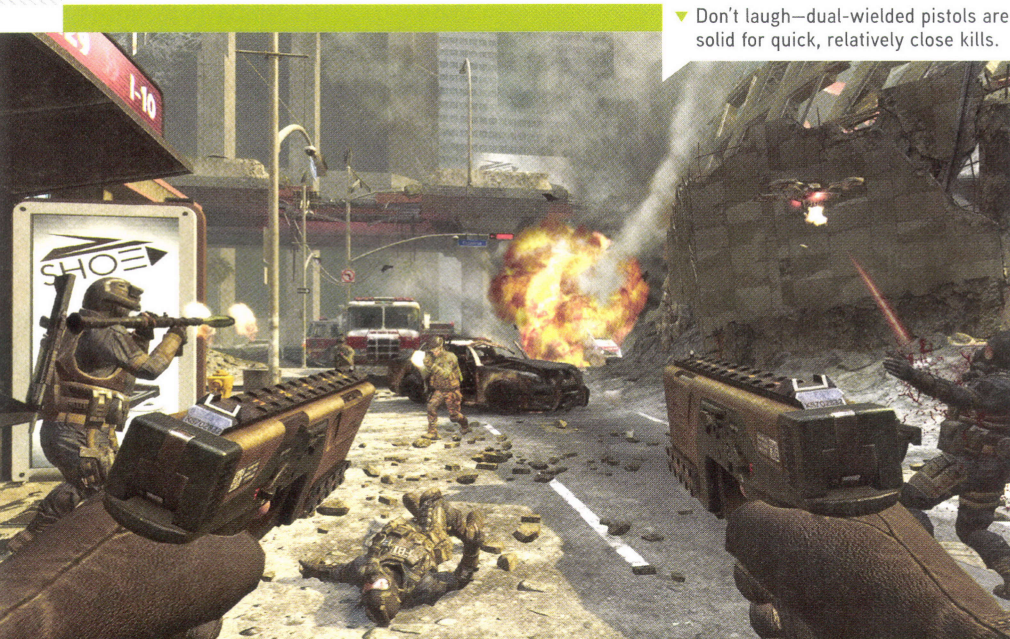
▲ Sighting down the barrel of a gun...and through the base of a destroyed windmill.



▲ There are many places to set up a crossfire, but you're never safe from a rear assault.

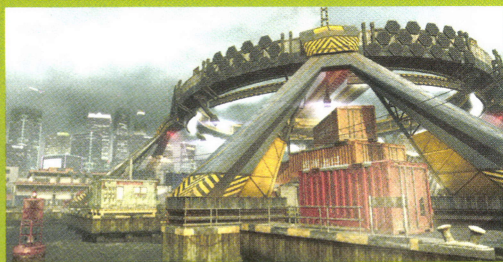
LIFE IS BUT A DRONE...

The quadrotor drone killstreak reward is a blast. It's fast, extremely maneuverable, good for aerial recon, and it'll get you a few more kills before the enemy catches on and blasts it out of the air. Death from above, indeed.

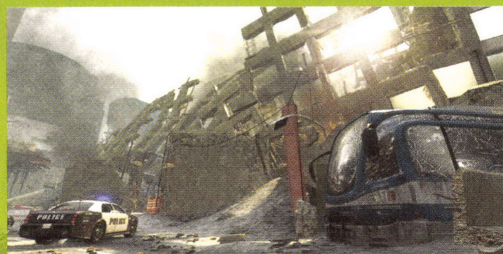


▼ Don't laugh—dual-wielded pistols are solid for quick, relatively close kills.

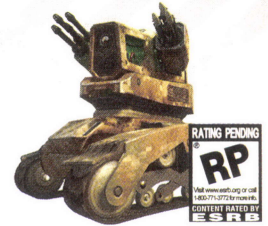
FUTURE WARES \\\



Black Ops II's multiplayer is all about new technology (circa 2025). One such item is the Guardian, a movable, tripod-mounted force field (seen at the far right in the above screen) that slows down and damages anyone who wanders into its disorienting path.



GAME DETAILS



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

INFO

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Treyarch
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

November 13, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 18-player online

GENRE

First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Shooterists seeking freshness; skeptics of Treyarch's takes

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



If you haven't already, get time with *Black Ops* to prep for the sequel's offerings.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Point allocation in setups should offer better balance
- ♥ Heavy variety in multiplayer gameplay modes
- ♥ eSports community should be happy with the built-in Shoutcasting tools



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ We haven't gotten details about Zombies mode yet

COMING THIS HOLID



Nintendo®



* Broadband Internet access required.

** Broadband Internet access required. Paid membership may be required.

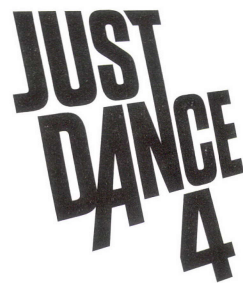
Game trademarks and copyrights are the properties of their respective owners. Nintendo trademarks are properties of Nintendo. © 2012 Nintendo.

Play Games

The all-new Wii U GamePad controller redefines the way you play

AY!

REDEFINE THE WAY YOU PLAY



Connect and Share

Connect with people around the world through Miiverse and the video chat feature*

Transform Entertainment

Experience TV shows, Movies and Video-On Demand like never before on the Wii U console**



May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.



FORZA HORIZON

Change is on (or in) the *Horizon* • Words: Andrew Hayward


Forza Motorsport may have taken the reins from *Gran Turismo* as the most celebrated modern racing simulation, but Microsoft seems eager to prove that the brand is no one-trick pony. It's poised to do just that with *Forza Horizon*, an amped-up new spin on the franchise that swaps circuit-based precision for thrills and spills across open asphalt.

Much like the similarly spun-off *Dirt Showdown*, *Forza Horizon* isn't meant as a new road forward for the proper series but rather an intriguing stop along the way, cherry-picking notable elements from the original entries while arranging them in a whole new way. Set outside of the fictional Horizon Festival music event in Colorado, the game delivers a wide array of open-road terrain to traverse through canyons, highways, and even small towns, all boasting beautiful natural backdrops.

Forza Horizon began development using the physics and graphics engines of last year's *Forza Motorsport 4* as the building blocks, but each was molded to match the new design. Looser, arcade-like handling is present, to make drifting around turns and weaving through traffic a breeze, though the assists can be turned off to access pure *Forza* physics and feel the minute differences between licensed vehicles.

And the game looks even sleeker than *Forza 4*, with a bit more gloss and visual punch as the sleek supercars cruise through the blinding sun. *Horizon* adds nighttime driving, too, which should offer a fresh challenge as you take up events around the

environment and challenge other racers to showdowns. But this isn't simply a typical *Forza* game with open roads and tweaked handling—it's dubbed an "action racing" game, which means points are earned for driving recklessly and crashing through traffic signs, guardrails, and the like.

It's not yet clear what the balance of racing and action will be in the final game, but clearly *Forza Horizon* is taking the franchise into some fresh territory, and it'll do so with eight-player antics via Xbox Live. What I've played to this point is fast, slick, and exciting, so while *Horizon* may be different, it's a change in tone that I'm ready to welcome with open arms. 

SWAPS CIRCUIT-BASED PRECISION FOR THRILLS AND SPILLS

▼ The *Forza* series' high-speed supercars are still present, albeit on fresh terrain.



▲ The game looks spectacular throughout, but especially so as the sun sets.

KINECT GPS

Charting a different path from the head-tracking feature of *Forza Motorsport 4*, Kinect will be utilized in *Forza Horizon* to optionally offer drivers an in-game GPS to help navigate the world. You can call out specific locations on the map or ask about nearby races to have the game automatically place a helpful path of arrows on the track ahead. You'll never have to wander aimlessly (unless you want to) with this seemingly subtle Kinect feature.



▲ Nighttime driving adds a distinct new element to *Forza*. Be careful out there!



▲ The 2011 Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG is an exclusive Best Buy pre-order bonus.

▼ The Horizon Festival offers thrilling backdrops as night falls.



FORZA HORIZON

INFO

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Playground Games / Turn 10 Studios
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

October 23, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online

GENRE

Racing

SUITABLE FOR

Arcade racers and open-road explorers

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Burnout Paradise is an open-world racing great—and still a total blast.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Forza Horizon*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Fast and fluid racing across vast, explorable terrain
- ♥ Action-oriented approach brings excitement to series

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Will *Horizon* maintain enough of the core *Forza*'s winning formula?



▼ Eating faces is all the rage overseas, and it's finally trending!



ZOMBIU

Putting the horror back into survival horror • Words: Casey DeFreitas

It's dark, and inhuman...things...roam about. Carefully, I navigate a deserted nursery. Bloodied child handprints greet me as my flashlight flickers. My breathing turns ragged, and a warped music box plays a few unsettling notes. I nervously activate my scanner, searching for missed ammo with the equipment that keeps me alive.

The Wii U's GamePad becomes the "Bug-Out Bag," a survival kit that includes everything needed for a zombie apocalypse. Using the pad's screen, you can access the inventory, map, and Environmental Scanner, which highlights items of interest. The screen also doubles as a scope for weapons and an interface for completing


special tasks, like lockpicking. Don't get too distracted, however, because you're accessing these tools in real time and a zombie can still sneak up on you at any moment. This creates an incredibly tense vibe.

**INSTILLS A FEAR
NOT ONLY OF
THE UNDEAD...**

Even more interesting is *ZombiU*'s death mechanic. While everyone knows a bite from a zombie equals certain zombification—in the real world, anyway—this basic truth

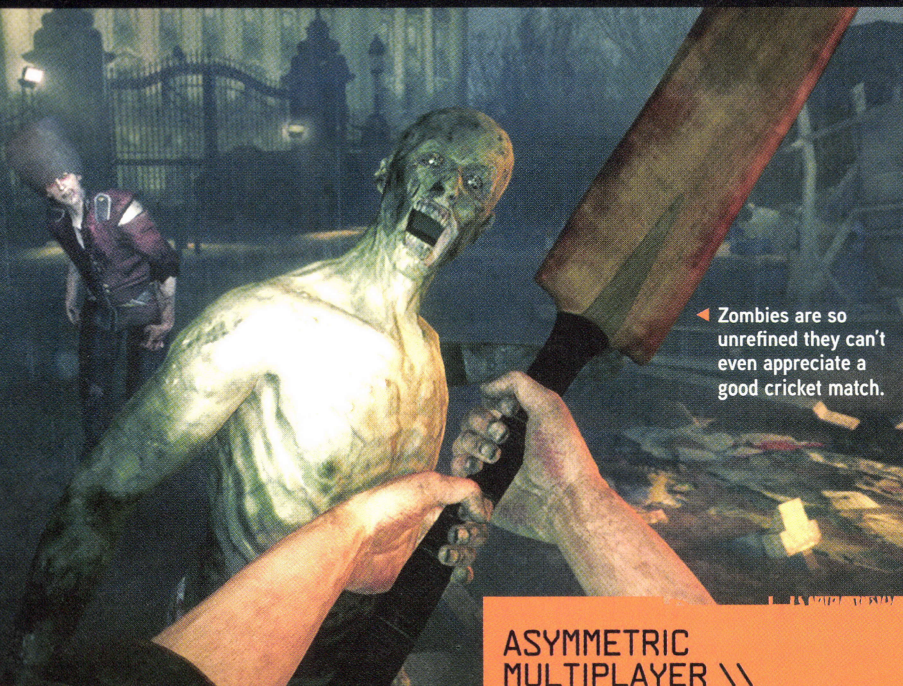
isn't reflected in most videogames. But in Ubisoft's take on the genre, one chomp and your current character becomes part of the flesh-eating horde.

If you're lucky, you'll have a vaccine. If not, that survivor is lost to the virus, leaving you to respawn as a different person elsewhere in London. Then you must retrieve the supply-filled BOB from your previous and now flesh-eating character, who is probably surrounded by the other zombies that killed him or her in the first place.

ZombiU instills a fear not only of the undead, but also of death itself. Hopefully the emphasis on the GamePad will add to—not distract from—this great atmosphere. 

NOT ALWAYS A ZOMBI //

In 1986, Ubisoft published its first game, *Zombi*. Though technically a reboot of that milestone, *ZombiU* actually began development as *Killer Freaks from Outer Space*. We first saw this quirky title at E3 2011, before Ubisoft decided to evolve the tone from strange and silly to serious. Enemies partially designed in the mold of Rayman's Rabbids are now zombies, and with them comes a more mature, terrifying concept.



▶ Zombies are so unrefined they can't even appreciate a good cricket match.

ASYMMETRIC MULTIPLAYER //

The Survivors vs. Zombies mode puts a unique spin on capture the flag-style multiplayer. Survivors play classic FPS style while Zombie Masters eye the map from the GamePad screen, strategically dropping different types of zombies around the environment.

NEW TOYS //

01 TIPPING POINT

Is *ZombiU* a sign that we'll see more mature games on Wii U than we did on Wii?

02 DISTRACTION

Don't get too side-tracked looking through your bag—a zombie is always nearby.



03 TOUCH ME

The GamePad's touch screen enables fairly slick navigation inside your inventory.

Wii U

GAME DETAILS



ZOMBIU

INFO

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montpellier
Platforms: Wii U

RELEASE DATE

TBA 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player local

GENRE

Survival horror / FPS

SUITABLE FOR

Fear seekers and zombie survivalists

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Resident Evil 4 does zombie survival horror on a Nintendo console, too, and it does an extremely good job.



WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *ZombiU*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Unique Wii U controls and a memorable death mechanic
- ♥ A horror game that actually instills a sense of dread



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ The GamePad's touch screen is tricky to master—especially under pressure from the undead



PS3 XBOX 360 PC



007 LEGENDS

INFO

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Eurocom
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

October 16, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 12-player online and
4-player local

GENRE

First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Bond historians up for a little
revisionism

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

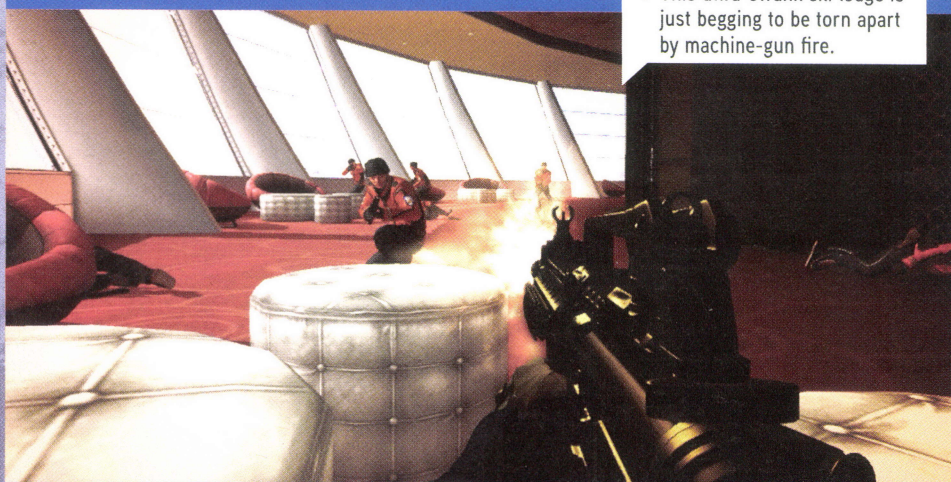
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded didn't hold a candle to the N64 original, but was still perfectly competent in its own right.



GAME DETAILS



HANDS-ON



▼ This ultra-swank ski lodge is just begging to be torn apart by machine-gun fire.

007 LEGENDS

Why settle for just one movie when you can have six? • Words: Mikel Reparaz

Following 1997's revolutionary *GoldenEye 007*, the James Bond games have been a long string of hits and misses, but last year's *GoldenEye 007: Reloaded* discovered a formula that worked fairly well: Just make it a T-rated *Call of Duty*, add a few gadgets, and reimagine everything for the Daniel Craig era. *007 Legends* looks to continue in the same vein, but instead of adapting just one Bond film, it's adapting six.

Of those six, the one that's been shown in the greatest detail is *Moonraker*, pitting Bond against Hugo Drax, a megalomaniac who wants to destroy humanity from outer space so he can repopulate Earth himself. His plan (along with everything else in *Moonraker*) has been modernized, as evidenced when Bond uses a smartphone to zero in on the wires connected to a security camera, follow them to a junction box, and shut down Drax's surveillance system. Some gadgets are still pretty old-school—such as a pen that fires explosive and tranquilizer darts—but

Moonraker's signature laser rifle has gotten an overhaul, becoming a sleek black thing that fires rapid volleys of blue light.

The set of missions based on *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* are decidedly lower-tech, but no less interesting; being set in the Swiss Alps, the OHMSS section promises plenty of high-altitude action. The brief glimpses offered so far show Bond blasting his way through a swank-looking resort, smashing henchmen through gondola windows, racing downhill in a gunfire-filled snowmobile chase sequence, and facing off against his archnemesis, Ernst Stavro Blofeld.

With missions based on more classic Bond films set to be revealed on a monthly basis, *Legends*' story campaign looks fairly meaty, but it's not all the game offers. The MI6 Ops challenge missions from *Reloaded* will return, as will an assortment of multiplayer modes. Whether it can actually recapture the original *GoldenEye*'s multiplayer glory is anyone's guess, but one more try certainly can't hurt. ☺

WANT MORE?
SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *007 Legends*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Half a dozen different Bond films should provide variety
- ♥ MI6 Ops mode will offer a chance to play as classic Bond villains

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Seeing Daniel Craig replace his predecessors is jarring
- ✗ *Skyfall* will be included, but only as post-launch DLC



FAMILIAR FACES \\\

While the gadgets and weapons have gotten a modern overhaul, *007 Legends* is a less drastic reimagining than *GoldenEye 007: Reloaded*, leaving its characters mostly untouched. Blofeld's iconic look hasn't changed since the '60s, and nigh-indestructible henchman Jaws looks just like actor Richard Kiel—which is great, because Bond's big fight against him in *Moonraker* wouldn't be as meaningful otherwise.



▲ Jaws is a terrifying adversary, and not just because of his metal teeth.

EXCLUSIVE COUPONS FOR @GAMERS INSIDE!

READER
SURVEY

GOT FEEDBACK?

We want to hear it. Take this quick, easy survey to tell us what YOU think of @GAMER!



READER SURVEY:

<http://goo.gl/Rf9WG>

\$160

IN **BEST BUY** COUPONS

Score tremendous savings on these hit games and more:

Prototype 2
Mass Effect 3
Lollipop Chainsaw



PRESENTED BY:
MARSHALL, 407 –
ROSEVILLE MI
BEST BUY EMPLOYEE

Saving money on the games you want is always a win-win, and @GAMER is always willing to deliver. For September, we've got an amazing \$160 in coupons.

Prototype 2 scored high in our review, but your price is low with \$30 off. If space-hopping commanders or zombie-chopping cheerleaders are more your thing, take \$20 off Mass Effect 3 and Lollipop Chainsaw with this issue's deals.

Don't forget to sign up for Best Buy's Reward Zone Gamers Club [Unlocked], so you never miss an issue of @GAMER. And scan the QR code to the right to see exclusive offers available only at Best Buy!



\$160 IN COUPONS

For PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, & more!

GOT FEEDBACK?

We want to hear it. Take this quick, easy survey to tell us what YOU think of @GAMER!

READER SURVEY: <http://goo.gl/Rf9WG>



01 PROTOTYPE 2

Become the ultimate shape-shifting weapon in this follow-up to the popular open-world action game, Prototype. You are Sgt. James Heller, an infected soldier with nothing to live for. There is one thing left to do—hunt down



and kill Alex Mercer with your new powers. Do all of this for \$30 off, a complete steal!



02 BATTLEFIELD 3

If you love multiplayer and haven't played Battlefield 3 yet, this \$30 coupon just removed any remaining excuses. Enormous maps, inventive modes, diverse classes, and awesome vehicles set this shooter's online



apart from—and above—the rest of the ranks. Enlist right now!



03 MASS EFFECT 3

Play through the first two but not the third? Continue the story shaped by your actions and decisions for \$20 off! Return to the role of Commander Shepard, and unite civilizations of the galaxy to work toward one final mission



to fight back the invading forces and save the Earth from total destruction.

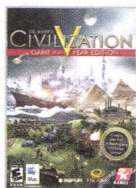


04 LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

Become Juliet Starling, a beautiful 18-year-old in a sassy cheerleader outfit. In other words, take on the role of a vicious zombie-slayer for \$20 off! Rev the engine of your chainsaw and grind through the flesh of



the undead as you uncover the cause of the zombie outbreak.



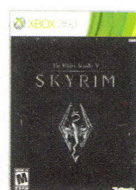
05 SELECT MAC TITLES

Got a Mac? No worries, Jack! Get \$15 off select games for Macs! These aren't just any Mac games, either. These are premium. Become a theme-park master in RollerCoaster Tycoon Platinum. Want to be more in on the action? Use authentic weapons as a U.S. Marine in Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare. Or, be one with the force in Star Wars: The Force Unleashed.



06 PRE-OWNED MADDEN NFL 12 OR NCAA FOOTBALL 12

Complete your fantastic football game collection with this \$15 off coupon! With all 32 NFL teams, stadiums, and your favorite players, Madden NFL 12 is true to the game. In NCAA Football 12, experience the true emotion of college football with all-new pre-game traditions, including the Sooner Schooner and Ramblin' Wreck, and celebrate exhilarating plays with school-specific icons.



07 ANY PRE-OWNED GAME \$29.99 OR ABOVE

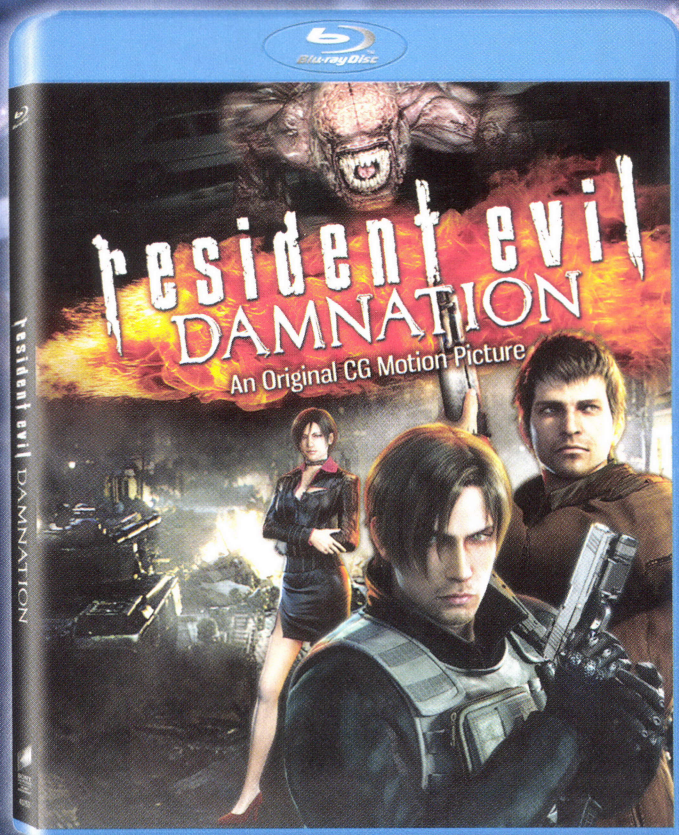
There are literally hundreds of pre-owned games to choose from that can be used with this \$10 off coupon. For example, usually priced at \$39.99, play through Link's newest adventure, The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for only \$29.99. Or prepare for Halo 4 by playing through the most recent Halo release, Halo Reach, for a discounted \$19.99. Get on it!



08 TRITTON PRIMER WIRELESS HEADSET

Get a sweet headset for \$20 off! In-game communication is key to your success, whether you're fighting on the battlefield or blitzing on the gridiron. You need to hear the quietest enemy footsteps and catch every detail of the next big play. This Tritton Primer Wireless Headset delivers. Includes a microphone, plus isolates individual volume controls for fine tuning.

resident evil DAMNATION

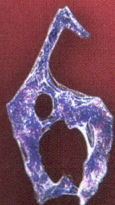


LOADED WITH
EXPLOSIVE
SPECIAL FEATURES

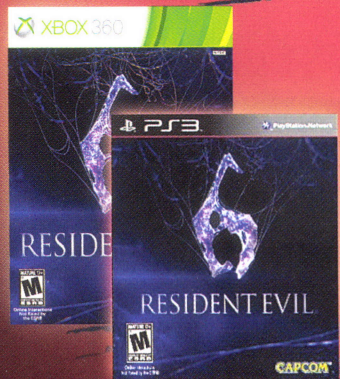
ON BLU-RAY™ AND DVD
SEPTEMBER 25TH

Include  **ULTRAVIOLET** Your Movies in the Cloud

ALSO AVAILABLE



RESIDENT EVIL.
10.02.2012
NO HOPE LEFT



WATCH THE
CHAOS AND
UNLEASH
MORE EVIL



R RESTRICTED
FOR BLOODY VIOLENT CONTENT

CAPCOM

www.residentevildamnation-movie.com

www.SonyPictures.com/Damnation

www.SonyPictures.com

© 2012 CAPCOM CO., LTD. / Resident Evil 6/2 Film Partners. All Rights Reserved. © 2012 Layout and Design Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

SONY
PICTURES
HOME
ENTERTAINMENT

LUIGI'S MANSION. DARK MOON

What a terrible night for a cleaning • Words: Heidi Kemp

Gusted!
Sneaky spooks
can't stand
against the power
of suck.

The Machine
A mean, green,
ghost-busting
machine, that
is. He has no





LUIGI'S MANSION: DARK MOON

INFO

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Next Level Games
Platforms: 3DS

RELEASE DATE

Holiday 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Aspiring ghostbusters and paranormal housemaids

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Rhythm Thief offers exploration, puzzle-solving, and mystery on 3DS as well. Read our review on page 82.



When the GameCube launched in 2001, it was the first Nintendo platform to debut without a "traditional" Mario title alongside it. But the famous plumber's family wasn't totally absent—instead, we got Luigi's Mansion, a puzzle-y action-adventure where the younger sibling had to rescue his big bro from a haunted house. Over a decade later, this fan-favorite is seeing a spooky second outing on the handheld 3DS.

Luigi's always been timid, and he isn't thrilled about setting foot in ghost hangouts again. But Professor E.

Gadd's got some new—and-improved equipment, including an upgraded flashlight and Poltergust 5000. He's charged Luigi with finding all the pieces of the shattered

Dark Moon across several historic homes. To help Luigi find these shards, E. Gadd also hands over an original Nintendo DS, which he updates with maps of new locations.

Since these mansions are old, decrepit, and inhabited by cranky spirits, they won't spill their secrets easily. This is where Luigi's equipment—and your puzzle-solving ingenuity—come into the mix. Need to shake a key item loose from something hanging up high? Perhaps switching your Poltergust from suck to blow will provide that extra push. Interacting with the

3D-enhanced environments is key to advancing, and is also a great way to find hidden goodies. If you get stuck, a special rainbow light can illuminate some background secrets. There's a lot to find—folks disappointed with the brief length of the original Luigi's Mansion will be pleased that Dark Moon features several large, themed locales to explore. Snowbound cabin in the woods? Yep, you'll be exploring that classic horror trope, along with several others.

Before the haunted houses yield their riches, however, Luigi will need to clean each house of ethereal foes. His trusty flashlight has a new charged strobe feature to stun several apparitions out of the darkness at once. When the ghosts are out, turning on the

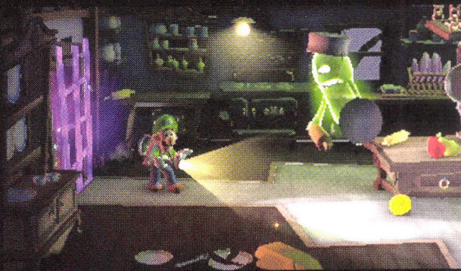
Poltergust and wrangling them will reduce their health. Once it's depleted, the ghost is in the (vacuum) bag. A new function activated by pressing the A button during lengthy struggles gives the suction some more oomph, allowing you to capture creeps even faster. You can even gather up a gaggle of ghoulies all at once if your suck-fu is sufficiently strong, adding additional skill and rewards for playing well. With more places to explore, upgraded devices, and plenty of puzzles, Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon is set to offer holiday housekeeping happiness. ☺

CRANKY SPIRITS WON'T SPILL THEIR SECRETS EASILY

A-HAUNTING WE WILL GO \\\



▲ Not exactly a beautiful day in the neighborhood, but cleaning needs to be done.



▲ Something's lurking in the kitchen, and it ain't that week-old meatloaf.



▲ Sorry to break hearts, but this is the closest you'll get to Nintendo's: *Undead Pals*.

BOND FROM BEYOND \\\

Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon represents a collaboration between Nintendo's famed Japanese production staff (including legendary designer Shigeru Miyamoto) and Vancouver-based developer Next Level Games. This isn't the first meeting of these minds: The two companies have also collaborated on the *Mario Strikers* series as well as the *Wii Punch-Out!!*.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Focuses on the beloved but oft-ignored little Mario sibling
- ♥ Faithful to the exploration and puzzle-solving of the original...
- ♥ ...while adding new 3DS-powered twists



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Slower-paced than most Mario-themed titles

PS3 PSVITA



PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SuperBot
Platforms: PS3, PS Vita

RELEASE DATE

October 23, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player online and local

GENRE

Fighting

SUITABLE FOR

Button-mashing brawlers who are sick of Mario

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



More Sony-themed party fun can be had with *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*.



CAME DETAILS



HANDS-ON

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Kratos, PaRappa, Jak, and Daxter on the same screen? Surreal and spectacular
- ♥ Super attacks and dual-themed stages add freshness to the *Smash Bros.* formula

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✕ Balancing still needs work... Fat Princess wins so often!



PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

Sony's family reunions always end in a fight • Words: Charlie Barratt

Question: What happens when you pit PlayStation's most iconic characters against each other in a franchise-crossing, fan-servicing fight? Answer: Everyone immediately accuses it of being a *Smash Bros.* clone. That's of course true to an extent—Nintendo definitely did this first—but Sony is bringing enough fun new ideas to the genre to justify its own brawler.

The coolest of these are "super attacks." Charge up a meter through regular moves and you'll eventually unlock one of three extra-powerful, often game-changing finisher moves. The longer you charge, the bigger they become: *Twisted Metal*'s homicidal clown Sweet Tooth goes from strapping a bomb on a single opponent to mowing down everyone with a massive mech. Nathan Drake can throw a grenade, knock over a pillar of ruins, or transform all of the other players into zombie Descendants from the first *Uncharted*.

With so much variety in the attacks and diversity in the characters—use Sly Cooper for stealth or *BioShock*'s Big Daddy for sheer brute strength—the game is adaptable to a ton of play styles. Even the stages mutate, from one clever Sony reference ("Hey, this is Metropolis from *Ratchet & Clank*!") to the next ("And it's just been invaded by the Hydra from *God of War*?"). *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale* may not be the first of its kind, but it could end up the most brilliantly bizarre.

01 SNIPER

Killzone's Colonel Radek uses long-range attacks to stay out of the fray.

02 STARTER

Uncharted's Nathan Drake is a good all-around brawler for beginners.

03 SINISTER

Twisted Metal's Sweet Tooth prefers destruction via bombs, missiles, and mechs.



▲ Scrap over special items, such as *God of War*'s Spear of Destiny or *Resistance*'s hedgehog grenade.



▲ The *LittleBigPlanet* arena is interrupted by a Buzz quiz show. Yes, you'll have to answer.

LEGO THE LORD OF THE RINGS

Can this fellowship break the formula? • Words: Charlie Barratt

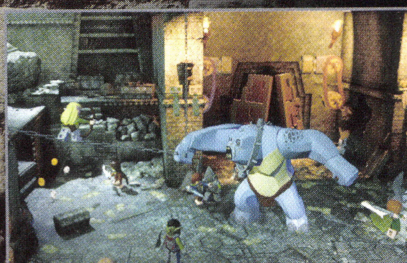
Plastic Gandalf stands on the plastic Bridge of Khazad-dûm, facing down a fearsome, fire-breathing (and, of course, also plastic) Balrog. The epic scene is now as adorably animated and meticulously miniaturized as you'd expect from a LEGO game, but it's also something surprising for this series: It's still epic.

While the wizard mimes waving away the smell of a Balrog belch for comic effect, he also shouts "You shall not pass!" in the booming, not-kidding-around voice of actor Sir Ian McKellen. And while he defeats the creature in simplistic, kid-friendly fashion—smashing it apart, brick by brick, with his staff—the fight looks almost as cinematic as the original, with more intense special effects than I'm used to seeing in a LEGO adaptation. That grander scale will also be evident in the open-world design. You won't load up a Hobbiton or Misty Mountains level; you'll actually journey from one location to the other across a fully re-created Middle-earth, collecting treasure—such as mithril bricks for custom weapons and armor—along the way.

The familiar gameplay formula of switching between characters to solve puzzles or defeat enemies seems unchanged, but with figures as fun, iconic, and diverse as these—I just used Aragorn to throw Gimli through an obstacle, then ran up a chain and shot a troll in the face with Legolas—who will mind? ☺



▲ Cut-scenes are more serious now that the movie's original (spoken) dialogue is used.



▲ Every member of the Fellowship plays a unique role in defeating this cave troll.

TO RULE THEM ALL \\\

Unlike its *Harry Potter* counterpart, *LEGO The Lord of the Rings* will cover all of the franchise films at once. Plus, the over 80 playable characters will include both heroes and villains. But what about the books? I request—nay, demand—brick Bombadil!



▲ "The day may come when we run out of ideas for *LEGO* games...but it is not this day!"

GAME DETAILS



LEGO THE LORD OF THE RINGS

INFO

Publisher: Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment
Developer: TT Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PC, 3DS, DS, PS Vita

RELEASE DATE

Fall 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player offline

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Bagginses, Boffins, and builders

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



LEGO Batman 2 also features a more sprawling setting: Gotham City, complete with Batmobile.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *LEGO The Lord of the Rings*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ *LEGO* games have never looked so epic and cinematic
- ♥ *Lord of the Rings* has never looked so cute and cuddly

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ The addition of voices could take away from the games' trademark humor

DISHONORED



The life and times of a tattoo assassin • Words: Malt Cabral

Going into my deep-diving, hands-on demo of *Dishonored*—Bethesda's ambitious first-person stealth-action title—I already knew it starred a vengeance-seeking supernatural assassin who sneaks about a steampunk/Victorian-era London-inspired fictional city dubbed "Dunwall." I'd also seen this cloaked killer conjure swarms of flesh-eating rats and witnessed his lethal bullet- and blade-fueled ballets. What I hadn't been privy to, however, is the precise path that turns Corvo Atano from a respected member of Dunwall's ruling class to a death-dealer dwelling in its shadows. Thankfully, my latest look at the game shed plenty of light—and quite a lot of blood—on his dark transformation.

As the story opens, you learn Corvo's been traveling abroad, sent by the Empress—the woman he's sworn to protect—to seek help for Dunwall's rat-plague problem. Arriving at her estate, he's greeted by her daughter, Emily, who clearly bonded with her mother's bodyguard. After joining Emily in a quick game of hide-and-seek—which serves as a tutorial for some of *Dishonored*'s stealth mechanics—you meet with the Empress.

Before I can finish briefing her, though, a group of teleporting ninja-like baddies swoop in; one incapacitates Corvo, while another runs a length of sharp steel through

the Empress' heart. In a blink-and-you'll-miss-it moment, Dunwall's leader is dead, her daughter's abducted, and Corvo's falsely accused of the whole thing.

Flash-forward six months and we find an imprisoned Corvo being interrogated before his execution; it's all a sham, though, as his accusers freely admit to framing him as part of their master plan to bring "strong leadership" to Dunwall. Tossed back into his cell, Corvo discovers a note and key hidden beneath a crust of bread...and so begins his blood-letting, conspiracy-cracking quest to clear his name and rescue Emily. ☹

A BLOODY, CONSPIRACY-CRACKING QUEST TO CLEAR YOUR NAME



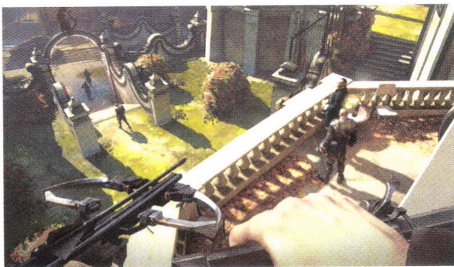
Silent Assassin
Quiet footsteps and a fast blade assist Corvo in his prison escape.



GRAB A BEER...AND CROSSBOW \\\

Following a prison escape that allows me to leave several guards' heads freed from their shoulders, Corvo enters Dunwall's sewer system. He finds a cache of supplies left by the "Loyalists"—a group of allies assisting with his liberation—before rendezvousing with a boatman who takes him to their hideout, a pub also serving as the game's mission-prep area. Corvo's embraced by the shadowy group and introduced to Piero, a gadget-making merchant who outfits Corvo with his life-taking toys. Before accepting his first story mission, Corvo grabs some shut-eye in this hub town-like environment.

▼ DARK CITY \\\



▲ While Dunwall isn't technically an open world, its expansive areas are ripe for exploration.



▲ The corrupt government's security includes electricity-spewing Tesla-inspired devices.



▲ *Dishonored's* rich art style is the most absorbing I've seen since I set foot in *BioShock's* Rapture.

MYSTERIOUS MEETING \\\

Corvo's first night with his new friends is interrupted by the "Outsider," a cryptic young chap who tattoos his hand with a mysterious symbol. Turns out the tat actually possesses some serious power, transforming Corvo from a simple assassin to a trained killer who can also teleport, slow time, and possess people and animals.

GAME DETAILS



HANDS-ON



DISHONORED

INFO

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
Developer: Arkane Studios
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

October 9, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

First-person stealth

SUITABLE FOR

Stylish, sneaky death-dealers

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Dishonored's fictional city and supernatural abilities recall *BioShock's* soggy setting and powerful plasmids.



WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Dishonored*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Richly realized and very original setting
- ♥ Slick supernatural powers
- ♥ Deep, story-driven campaign
- ♥ Free-form stealth-action

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Will this promising new property get buried in fall 2012's avalanche of blockbuster sequels?

**THE UNDEAD:**

Tall Oaks is ground zero for a bioterrorist attack, which results in a new zombie outbreak.

RESIDENT EVIL 6

THE MOST AMBITIOUS,
IMMERSIVE, AND FEATURE-
RICH RESIDENT EVIL
TO-DATE

WORDS: RYAN TALJONICH




Leon Kennedy's no stranger to undeath, but he's drained after my close encounter with new members of the flesh-eating horde. Tall Oaks, a college town that looks a lot like Raccoon City, has been lost to the C-Virus. I enter a nearby home and encounter its dead, half-eaten occupants. A family. I keep waiting for one of them to suddenly rise and attack, like so many others. But they don't. Instead, they stare with dead eyes, horrific looks frozen on their mangled faces. Suddenly a window shatters, and a crescendo of moans follows. I feel a sense of dark, moody tension I haven't felt in a Resident Evil game in years.

Then I switch to a different campaign. Chris Redfield and his squad are tasked with containing a bioterrorist attack in the fictional Chinese city of Lanshiang. It's here I encounter the J'avo—freakish zombie-like monsters that can transform into even deadlier creatures. I shoot one in the arm and it drops its weapon. Without warning, a giant hammer-like appendage sprouts from its shoulder, and it hits me with a home-run swing, sending me flying. Sprawled out on the ground, I crawl backwards as it prepares to crush me. It swings, but I roll out of the way just in time and blast the bullet sponge into oblivion. I look up. Four more J'avo are closing in on me. I'm out of ammo.

In yet another scenario, Jake Muller—Albert Wesker's son—is in Europe, on the run from a giant Nemesis-like Bio Organic Weapon (B.O.W.). It chases me into an icy cave, and I have to sneak past it. One wrong move and the B.O.W. will rearrange my innards with its giant rotating claw arm. I escape, only to run into a large group of J'avo. Thankfully, Jake has the unique ability to supercharge his melee attacks and take down enemies with his genetically enhanced fists—I guess having a father who frequently indulged in virus cocktails has its perks.

Each of RE6's three separate campaigns features a different pair of characters (see



sidebar) and can be tackled in any order you choose. Though all of them share an action-heavy approach, each has a surprisingly distinct flavor. But after finishing my demo, I couldn't help but reflect on Resident Evil as a whole. It's a series with a history steeped in reinvention: The original popularized survival horror. RE4 redefined the third-person shooter, paving the way for such games as *Dead Space* and *Gears of War*. RE6, however, is a franchise metamorphosis that aims to prove Resident Evil can hang with the contemporaries it inspired while retaining its signature scares. If my eight hours of playtime is any indication, it's on track to deliver. 

THE J'AVO

Similar to the Majini in RE5, the J'avo are smarter and stronger than their zombie counterparts.

DON'T GO IT ALONE

Each of the main characters in RE6's three campaigns has a player- or AI-controlled teammate. Your partner will be invaluable when it comes time to face the horrific creations of the C-Virus.

JAKE & SHERRY

While Jake can use guns or his ultra-deadly fists, Sherry uses her machine pistol to mow down monsters.



CHRIS & PIERS

Chris's weapon of choice is his trusty assault rifle, while Piers packs a whopping sniper rifle capable of blowing the J'avo a brand new pie hole.



LEON & HELENA

Leon finds Helena in Tall Oaks during the zombie outbreak—she's a mysterious woman (and a very capable sidekick) who claims to have been involved in the attack.



SOMETIMES,
IT'S BETTER TO
RUN THAN GUN

SURVIVAL HORROR RETURNS?

Out of ammo? No sweat

Every character can perform admittedly over-the-top melee attacks—especially Jake—which are useful for knocking down zombies and caving in their rotting skulls. I found myself thinking a lot about the definition of "survival horror" during my demo—somehow, fist-fighting zombies didn't quite mesh with what I had in mind.

More often than not, you'll use these attacks out of necessity once your clips run dry and the bullets you find are outnumbered by the monsters trying to kill you.

Conserving ammo, grenades, and healing items is an important part of RE6, as you'll often find yourself overrun by seemingly unmanageable numbers of brain-hungry monsters. Sometimes, it's better to run than gun.

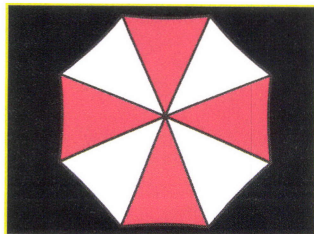


BOULDER-DASH

Chris apparently lost some muscle mass since *RE5*. While his boulder-punching days may be numbered, he's still licensed to perform machine-gun dentistry.

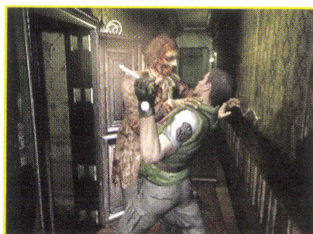
RESIDENT EVIL TIMELINE

UMBRELLA FORMED
APRIL, 1968



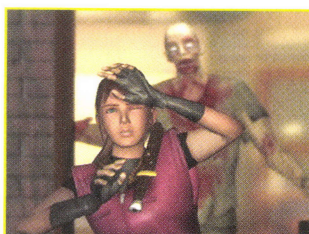
Umbrella Pharmaceuticals is formed by Oswell Spencer, Edward Ashford, and James Marcus. The company is a front, built to mask its true purpose as a research organization for the Progenitor virus, the predecessor to the T-Virus.

BIZARRE MURDERS
JULY, 1998



A series of murders on the outskirts of Raccoon City brings the Alpha and Bravo team of S.T.A.R.S. to an Umbrella research facility disguised as a mansion. Most are killed by the horrors within, which were created as a result of a T-Virus outbreak.

RACCOON CITY
SEPTEMBER, 1998



The T-Virus spreads to Raccoon City, turning residents into zombies. Leon Kennedy, a rookie cop, finds Claire Redfield, Chris's sister, and the pair work together to survive. Umbrella's research secrets are uncovered in the process, as is the new G-Virus.

NEMESIS
SEPTEMBER, 1998



Two months after surviving Umbrella's mansion, Jill Valentine attempts to escape a zombie-infested Raccoon City while being pursued by the Bio Organic Weapon, Nemesis. Raccoon City is destroyed and the zombie outbreak is contained.



ALL 4 ONE

Boss battles like these can be downright difficult if going solo. Having an extra pair of helpers will make things easier.



CROSSOVER

Where campaigns collide

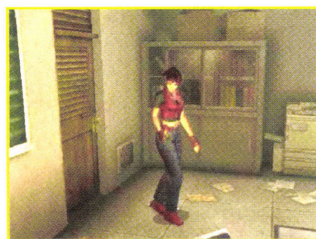
Occasionally throughout the story, RE6's multiple campaigns will intersect with one another—when this happens, Crossover mode initiates, allowing up to four players to work together via co-op.

For example, both Jake and Leon encounter the same blood-thirsty B.O.W. in their campaigns at the exact same time. With Crossover enabled,

you and a friend can take on the hulking monstrosity alongside two other players, making the challenging encounter drastically easier.

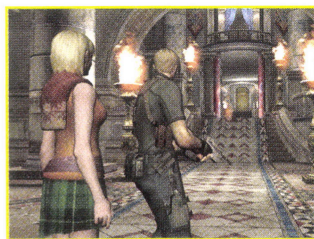
Of course, if you prefer to play solo, all four characters will still be involved in the fight—that's dictated by the story—but the other characters will be AI-controlled. Just expect a longer battle, as AI characters usually aren't as capable as player-driven ones.

ROCKFORT ISLAND DECEMBER, 1998



Claire tries to find her brother, Chris, by raiding an Umbrella facility in Paris, but is captured and imprisoned on Rockfort Island. After attempting to escape, Claire ends up trapped in an Umbrella facility in the Antarctic, and is eventually saved by Chris.

RESCUE MISSION 2004



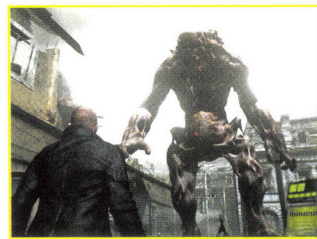
Ashley Graham, the President's daughter, is kidnapped by a mysterious cult in Europe. Leon Kennedy is sent to rescue her, and encounters the crazed villagers of a rural town infected by a mind-controlling parasite known as Las Plagas.

BLACK MARKET B.O.W. 2009



Chris Redfield and Sheva Alomar of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance are sent to Africa to stop the sale of a B.O.W. on the black market. They encounter parasite-controlled Majini, and defeat Albert Wesker before escaping.

GLOBAL TERRORISM 2013



A series of massive bioterrorist attacks are unleashed around the globe. Leon Kennedy, Chris Redfield, and Jake Muller each find themselves trying to uncover the truth behind the attacks as they take on the monstrous creations of the new C-Virus.



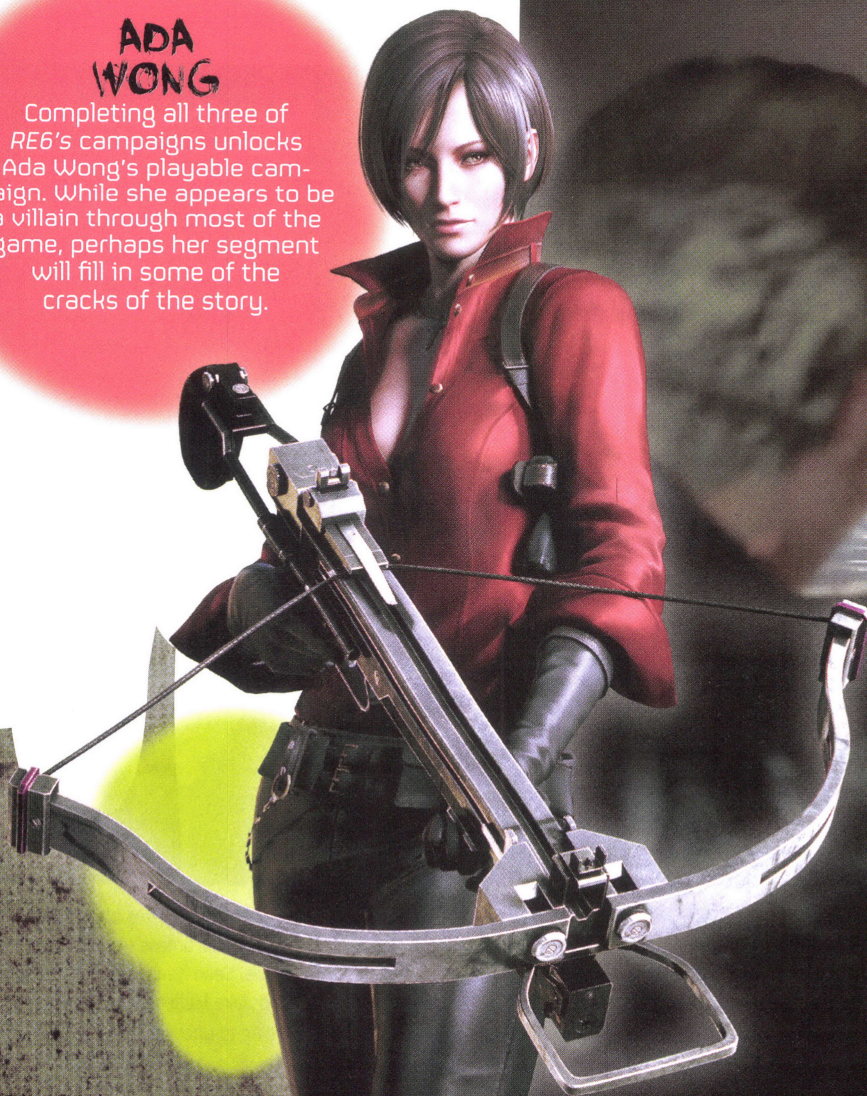
AGENT HUNT

Take down your favorite characters zombie-style

As if three campaigns (four, if you count Ada Wong's unlockable scenario) weren't enough to keep you busy, Capcom's introducing a whole new mode in RE6 called Agent Hunt. Here, you can enter the campaigns of other players as a C-Virus monster to try and kill them before they complete their objectives. You can't just go trolling anyone, though—you can only enter the games of players who are replaying levels they've already completed. Of course, you also have the option to prevent players from joining your game if you prefer to play uninterrupted.

ADA WONG

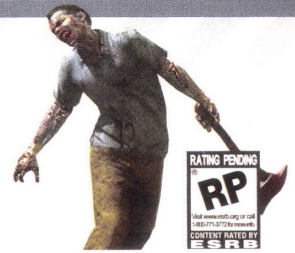
Completing all three of RE6's campaigns unlocks Ada Wong's playable campaign. While she appears to be a villain through most of the game, perhaps her segment will fill in some of the cracks of the story.



MERCENARIES

Making a return in RE6, the Mercenaries minigame pits players against the clock in an all-out zombie-slaying brawl. The more you kill, the higher your score.





RESIDENT EVIL 6

INFO

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

October 2, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player online

GENRE

Survival horror

SUITABLE FOR

Zombie fanatics, scare-seeking thrill hounds

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Dead Space is a modern take on the survival horror genre, and scary as all get out.

WANT MORE?
SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Resident Evil 6*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ A much-needed makeover of *Resident Evil*'s controls
- ♥ Lengthy campaign and interesting multiplayer components



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Super over-the-top melee animations
- ✗ Can *Resident Evil* find its identity again?

YOU CAN ENTER
THE CAMPAIGNS OF
OTHER PLAYERS AS A
C-VIRUS MONSTER

TRAIN WRECK

Leon may be outnumbered, but zombies aren't fast enough to dodge trains.



DON'T BE SCARED.

BE PREPARED.


ZOMBIE SURVIVAL GUIDE

TIPS TO OUT LIVE THE UNDEAD



Videogames taught us all we need to know to survive the impending undead invasion • Words: Hollander Cooper

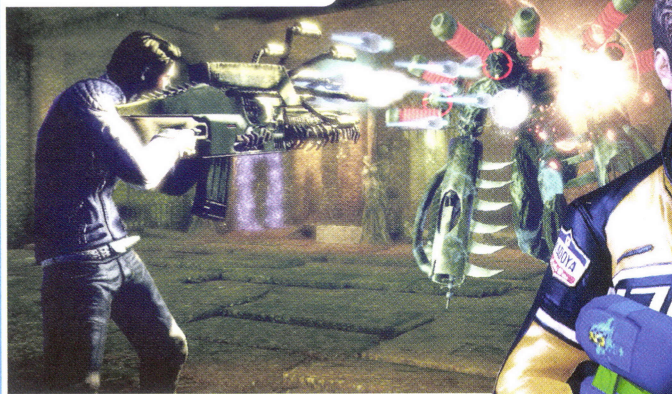
Let's be honest: The zombie apocalypse is coming, and it's coming soon. Why? Think about it. There are people biting each other in Florida, scientists are bound to stumble across some sort of regenerative treatment that'll accidentally cause the dead to return to life, and the world is overdue for a new plague. Face the facts. It's going to happen—and although it can't be prevented, it can certainly be prepared for.

Before you lock yourself in a panic room and load up with a few years' worth of canned goods (and rechargeable batteries to play handheld games), it's a good idea to learn what sorts of skills you'll need to take with you into the uncertain (and undead-filled) future. As gamers, we have access to the best zombie apocalypse simulators on the planet: videogames. So buckle down and grab a controller—it's time to hone those survival skills. 

1

YOU'RE GOING TO NEED GUNS, LOTS OF GUNS...

A. Shadows of the Damned



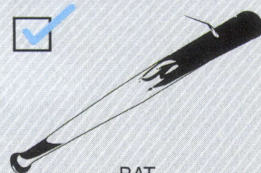
Lock and load. The undead need to be re-deadified, so get your hands on all the guns you can and fight back like your life depends on it, because it sort of totally does. *Dead Rising 2* is chock-full of experimental weapons to inspire your violent side, and games like *Shadows of the Damned* show exactly how many zombies one man can kill when he puts his mind (and his trigger finger) to it.

B. Dead Rising 2



QUICK TIP

PACK WITH CARE
WHAT TO LOOK FOR:



BAT
(WITH OR WITHOUT NAIL)



CHAINSAW



GUN

2

...OR MELEE WEAPONS, IF THAT'S YOUR THING

One clip of ammo might take down a small swarm of shambling zombies, but a good, strong arm and a sword? You're cleaving through armies. Pick up any melee weapons you can carry and work on your swing—you're going to need it for when the ammo runs low and the zombies get close.

QUICK TIP

Cricket bats make awesome zombie-smashing weapons. Pick one up!

Dead Island



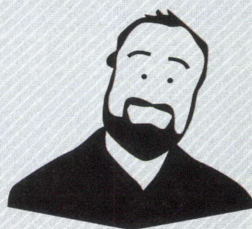
CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS CAREFULLY
WHAT TO LOOK FOR:



ZOMBIES



MARAUDERS



FRIENDLY HUMANS

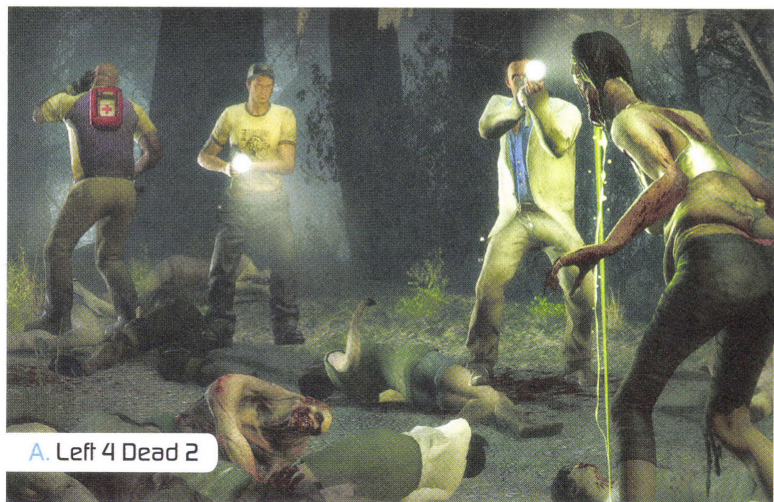


CANNIBALISTIC HUMANS

3

STICK WITH FRIENDS

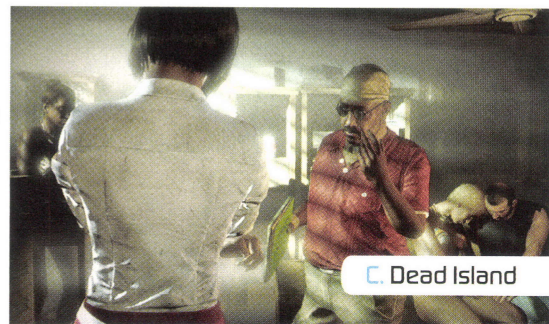
You're not going to do this alone—you need someone to watch the door for zombies while you pee, after all. That's why, as preschool (and *Left 4 Dead*) teaches, it's best to buddy up. Grab some friends, make sure they won't kill you for your ammo, and hope they'll be quiet when you stumble upon a Witch.



A. *Left 4 Dead 2*



B. *Resident Evil 5*



C. *Dead Island*

4

DOCUMENT THE WHOLE THING

While the zombie apocalypse is technically the end of the world, there will be life after the undead. Someone needs to tell the story. Pick up a camera, find a few notebooks, and start recording history. If it all blows over, you'll snag a Pulitzer; if it doesn't, well, at least you kept yourself busy.



Dead Rising 2

▼ **Lights, Camera, Action**
Get one of those shaky cams, too, so you can make a low-budget movie.

5

DON'T BOTHER LOOKING FOR A CURE

Listen, we hate to break it to you, but you're not going to stumble across some magical fix for this thing. You don't know if the zombies are caused by a virus (like in *Resident Evil*) or by some other magical, mysterious source (like in most other games). Save time by working on staying alive, and let the eggheads sort that stuff out.

QUICK TIP

When the zombies invade, there's only one "cure" that will keep you alive: running.



Resident Evil 5

6

FIND A ZOMBIE-KILLING OUTFIT

You're going to be covered in blood fairly quickly during the zombie apocalypse, so you'd better get out-fitted in an outfit that fits. Pick a get-up that matches your unique personality and make sure it still allows you great maneuverability on the battlefield, like a cheerleading outfit or some other kind of dress!



Lollipop Chainsaw

7

DON'T TRUST OTHER SURVIVORS

Seriously, don't believe anyone. People might tell you they have ammo, food, or water for you, but they likely just want to steal your stuff or eat you for breakfast or turn your skin into a suit. *The Last of Us* and *The Walking Dead* are just a few of the many games that will help you to re-affirm and reinforce a healthy mistrust of humanity.

QUICK TIP

It's survival of the fittest, so it's probably a good idea to, you know, be fit.



The Last of Us

QUICK TIP

TAKE AIM!

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A. Torso Shot

Don't even bother—they don't need organs.

C. Leg Shot

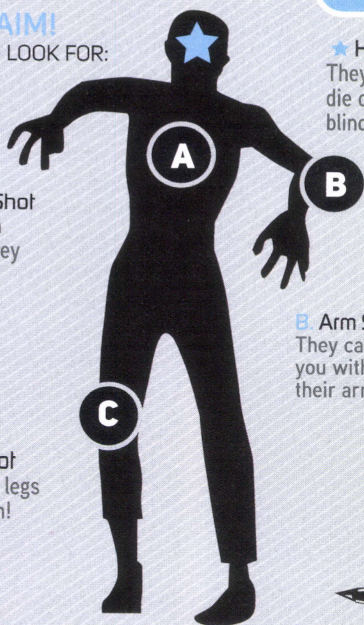
Blast their legs off and run!

★ Head Shot

They'll either die or be blinded.

B. Arm Shot

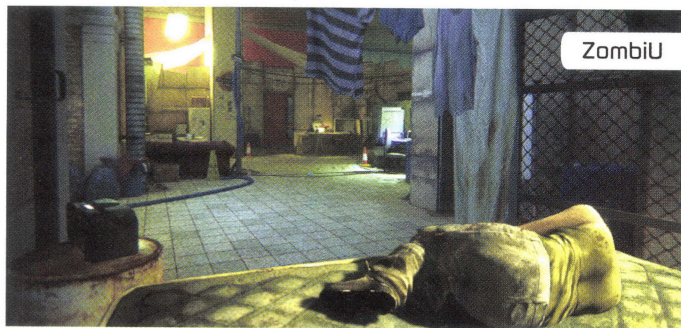
They can't grab you without their arms.



8

OBTAIN BOY SCOUT-LEVEL SURVIVAL SKILLS

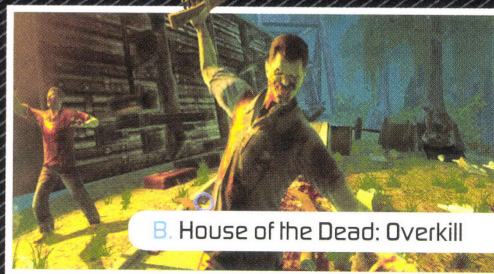
Making a fire, tying a knot, camping in the wilderness—these skills are going to be invaluable once the infrastructure crumbles and the power goes out. First-aid skills and the ability to pick locks will also be important, as shown in games like *ZombiU*, proving the importance of learning skills other than shooting corpses.



9

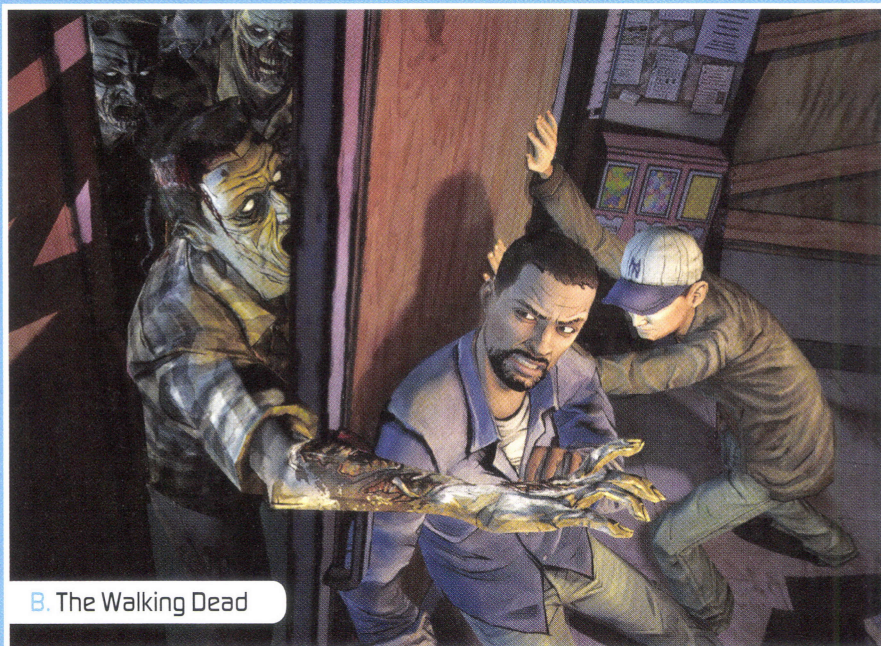
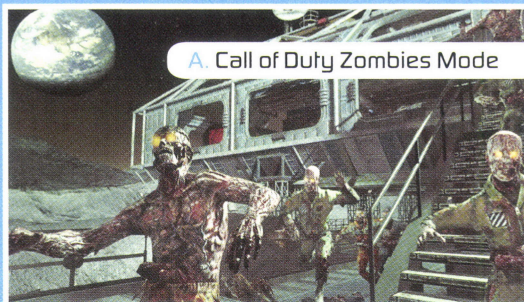
ALWAYS AIM FOR THE HEAD

When the dead rise from their graves, it's your job to put them back down, and the fastest way to do them in is to aim for the head. Destroy the brain and it doesn't matter if they're magical or biological zombies—they'll be dead. Well, unless they're *Dead Space* necromorphs, but even then you'll slow them down a bit.



REINFORCE ENTRY POINTS

Zombies aren't smart enough to unlock doors or climb through vents, so as long as you block any entrances and windows you're likely safe. Just do like you do in *Call of Duty's* Zombies mode and cover points of entry with planks of wood. That should be enough to keep them away from your delicious brain.



QUICK TIP

PRIORITIZE YOUR SURVIVAL

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A CLASS A: FIREARMS/EXPLOSIVES

- ☐ PISTOL
- ☒ SHOTGUN
- ☐ RIFLE
- ☐ EXPLOSIVES

B CLASS B: MELEE WEAPONS

- ☐ BLUDGEONING
- ☐ IMPALING
- ☒ HACKING
- ☐ SAWING

C CLASS C: DEFENSIVE AIDS

- ☒ RIOT SHIELD
- ☐ GAS MASK
- ☐ BODY ARMOR
- ☐ THICK SOCKS

FIVE ZOMBIE MOVIES TO GET READY

Pop in a Blu-ray once you're done gaming and take some zombie-slaying notes.

1

SHAUN OF THE DEAD

Sure, this movie is a comedy, but it teaches an important lesson: Even when zombies attack, love can still bloom.

2

DAWN OF THE DEAD

The original will teach you how to deal with shambling corpses, whereas the remake lets you know what to do if they can run.

3

28 DAYS LATER

If you wake up from a coma and find the world overrun by undead, maybe you should just go back to sleep.

4

ZOMBIELAND

This film is filled with important zombie-hunting tips, and it also stars Woody Harrelson. That's a win-win for all!

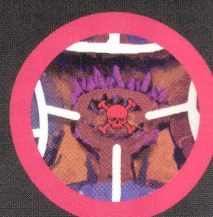
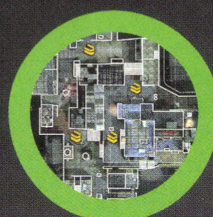
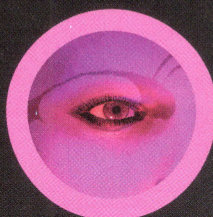
5

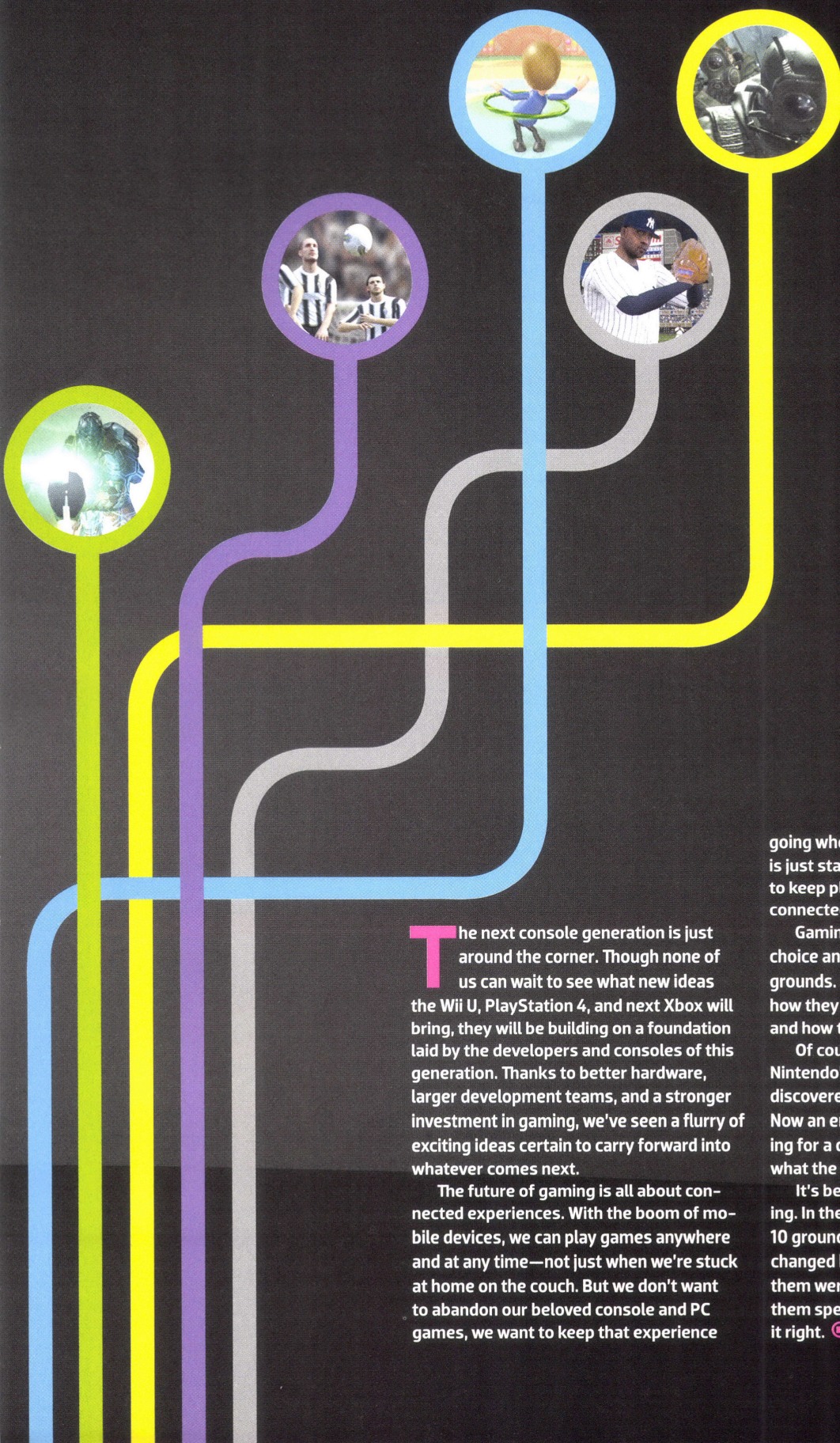
PLANET TERROR

Robert Rodriguez's *Planet Terror* is scary, violent, bloody, and sexy. The real-life apocalypse will be at least three of those.

Games That Changed Gaming

Innovations from this gen that will help define the next
• Words: Hilary Goldstein






The next console generation is just around the corner. Though none of us can wait to see what new ideas the Wii U, PlayStation 4, and next Xbox will bring, they will be building on a foundation laid by the developers and consoles of this generation. Thanks to better hardware, larger development teams, and a stronger investment in gaming, we've seen a flurry of exciting ideas certain to carry forward into whatever comes next.

The future of gaming is all about connected experiences. With the boom of mobile devices, we can play games anywhere and at any time—not just when we're stuck at home on the couch. But we don't want to abandon our beloved console and PC games, we want to keep that experience

going when we travel. The games industry is just starting to figure out ways to allow us to keep playing the games we love or to stay connected to them when we're on the go.

Gaming has also become about bringing choice and individuality to our virtual playgrounds. It's about allowing people to define how they will play a game, who they'll be, and how they'll impact the game world.

Of course, with the introduction of Nintendo's Wii, millions of "non-gamers" discovered the joys of playing videogames. Now an entirely new set of people are itching for a different type of experience than what the traditional game genres offer.

It's been an exciting seven years in gaming. In the following pages, you'll discover 10 groundbreaking games that have forever changed how we game. Though not all of them were the first to attempt what's made them special, these are the games that got it right. 



Halo 3

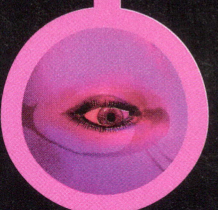
Recording and uploading of footage in-game

What it did: The game automatically recorded every campaign and multiplayer moment, enabling gamers to view the action from any angle and from anywhere on the battlefield. Awesome kills, embarrassing gaffes, and secrets could be shared with millions.

How it changed gaming: Before *Halo 3*, if you ricocheted a bullet off a wall and capped your buddy in the head for an epic kill, you only had your word as proof. With *Halo 3*'s always-on recording feature, nothing was left to hearsay. What once was restricted to bragging rights on your couch expanded to several million couches. First-person shooters could no longer be isolated to a series of small communities. Multiplayer became a worldwide event.



▲ By March 2009, just a year and a half after *Halo 3*'s release, more than one billion matches had been played and recorded.



Mass Effect

Game saves impacted future sequels

What it did: Decisions made in the original *Mass Effect* altered dialogue and story options in *Mass Effect 2*. Decisions within both those games then branched out further, creating numerous alternate experiences in *Mass Effect 3*.

How it changed gaming: Many games have offered token prizes for having played previous entries in a series. *Mass Effect*, however, raised the stakes—it made choices matter over the course of all three games, creating a personalized storyline for every gamer. Playing *Mass Effect 3* without a save from the previous games felt hollow, as seeing the consequences of your actions from games played years earlier made for a living narrative that spanned the length of a console generation. Weaving the narrative threads and player-made choices of three RPGs into one overarching tale is one of the most impressive feats ever accomplished in gaming.



▲ In the *Mass Effect* series, the lives of your crew—and everyone in the universe—are in your hands.



Wii Sports

Introduced motion control

What it did: Bundled in with Nintendo's revolutionary Wii console, this collection of sports minigames served as an introduction to an entirely new way of controlling games.

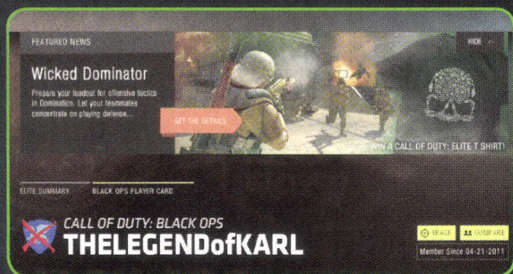
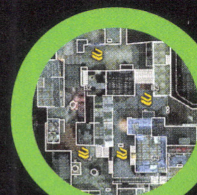
How it changed gaming: Though the Wii focused on motion controls, the simplicity of *Wii Sports* got the entire family involved. Moms and dads—heck, even grandparents—stopped spectating and became gamers for the first time in their lives. With *Wii Sports*, gaming left the basement and became living room entertainment.



▲ According to Nintendo, more than 95 million Wiis have been shipped around the world.

Call of Duty Elite

Introduced the DLC season pass



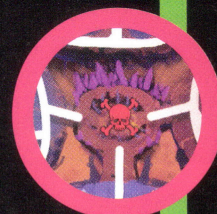
What it did: Rather than buying map packs as they became available, your paid subscription to this service entitled you to in-depth multiplayer stats and all Call of Duty DLC.

How it changed gaming: Since the release of *Elite*, there isn't a major console game today that doesn't offer some form of a "season pass" for downloadable content, causing fickle gamers to find themselves committed to a single game for an entire year. Developers now feel it's crucial to hook gamers and keep them playing. Need proof? *Halo 4* comes with a free season of co-op DLC.

▲ Though *Call of Duty Elite* is technically not a game, it has still shaped the way we think about DLC.

League of Legends

Created the MOBA genre



What it did: It took the basis for *Warcraft III*'s *Defense of the Ancients* mod and expanded on it, creating the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) genre.

How it changed gaming: Though the MOBA genre got an early start in mods from other games, *League of Legends* refined and expanded past concepts and released as a full-fledged free-to-play title. Since then, a number of other MOBA games, including *Heroes of Newerth* and *Monday Night Combat*, have found success using *League of Legends*' formula.



▲ Unlike an RTS, where you build and control armies, MOBAs typically give you control of just one Champion.



Dust 514

Integrated the world of two different MMOs



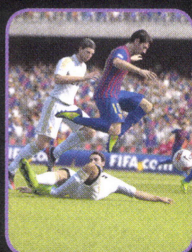
▲ Remember that every time you die in *Dust 514*, you make someone playing *EVE Online* cry.

What it did: *EVE Online* and *Dust 514* are separate MMOs that share an in-game economy and influence one another via politics and warfare. Players in *EVE Online* hire *Dust 514* gamers to fight for them in planetside skirmishes.

How it changed gaming: No one has ever seen anything quite like what developer CCP is attempting with its free-to-play PS3 MMO, *Dust 514*. This is the most fully realized galactic war in gaming, with *EVE* players experiencing the larger-scale side of war from ships in space, while *Dust 514* players act as mercenaries spilling blood on the ground.

FIFA 13

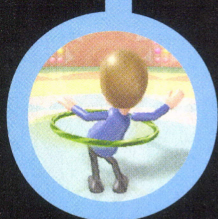
Web & mobile integration



▲ The *FIFA* iPhone app lets you build and manage your Ultimate Team away from the game.

What it did: No matter which version of *FIFA 13*—console, handheld, iPhone, or iPad—you play, you're connected through a single identity, creating a uniform experience.

How it changed gaming: Games have struggled to tie a player's experience from a console to their phone—until *FIFA 13*. The game unites your identity across all platforms and carries over your earnings from *FIFA 12* to boot. This means you now have a metagame career that persists beyond not only the console game, but a single year of a sports game.



Wii Fit

Legitimized fitness games

What it did: It brought a whole new genre to gaming—one that's honestly good for your health. Fitness and weight loss became a fun activity in front of the TV, not a chore.

How it changed gaming: As if the Wii didn't have enough ways to entice non-gamers to start playing games, *Wii Fit* came along and offered a way to lose weight while having (sort of) a good time. *Wii Fit* kicked off a craze. EA and Ubisoft quickly joined with *Sports Active* and *Your Shape*.



▲ The exercise games in *Wii Fit* can't teach you to put down those fries.



MLB: The Show

From console to handheld



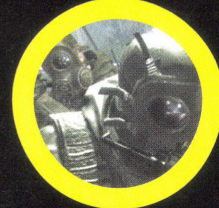
▲ The one catch is that you have to own a copy of *MLB: The Show 12* for both PS3 and Vita.

What it did: Transfer your *MLB: The Show 12* game back and forth between your PlayStation and PS Vita. You can continue a saved game, your franchise, or your Road to the Show career on the go.

How it changed gaming: It's always felt a little strange that, for the most part, Sony's console and its handheld offered the same games, but weren't connected. This is the start of something big. Thanks to Vita's power, games that could only exist on PS3 can now become portable. Gaming doesn't just happen when you're on your couch anymore. It's on the train, during lunch breaks at work, and even in the bathroom. Now, your game never has to stop, no matter where you are.

Call of Duty 4 Modern Warfare

Redefined FPS multiplayer



What it did: Call of Duty 4 turned FPS multiplayer into an RPG. Players leveled up, unlocked items, altered their abilities by selecting perks, and customized their weapons to maximize their kill efficiency. And there were in-game rewards for killing streaks.

How it changed gaming: No game has been more influential this generation than *Modern Warfare*. Though other games might give some features different names, just about every shooter offers some form of a perk system. But the core of what Call of Duty 4 got right was giving players constant rewards. You earned points for just about everything you did and were always leveling up or unlocking something new. *Modern Warfare* made customization and gratification the centerpiece for nearly all modern multiplayer shooters.



▲ Call of Duty 4 had only three Killstreak rewards: UAV Radar, Airstrike, and Attack Helicopter.

THE TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

AVAILABLE 09.11.12

**PRE-ORDER AT BEST BUY® AND GET EARLY ACCESS TO
ANGEL AND MICHELLE, PLUS THE BONUS SNOOP DOGG STAGE!**



LARGEST PLAYABLE ROSTER EVER IN A TEKKEN™ GAME!

**ALL NEW MOVES, MODES AND STAGES PLUS ONLINE FEATURES
BRINGING PLAYERS TOGETHER LIKE NEVER BEFORE!**

2-ON-2, 1-ON-1 OR 1-ON-2 BATTLES



www.TEKKEN.com



TEKKEN™TAG TOURNAMENT 2 & © 2012 NAMCO BANDAI Games Inc.
KINECT, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft.
"PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks and "PS3" and the PlayStation Network logo are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

TOP PICKS



TOP PICKS

RATINGS BREAKDOWN:

@GAMER includes only the best games in our Top Picks section. If you don't see it here, it's probably not worth getting.

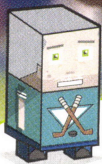
- An average game. Just worthy enough to call to your attention.
- A good game with some flaws. Fans of the genre will probably enjoy it.
- An excellent game that we strongly recommend.
- A near-perfect gaming experience.

62
MADDEN NFL 13

- 62 MADDEN NFL 13
- 66 DARKSIDERS II
- 70 NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2
- 72 SLEEPING DOGS
- 74 TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2
- 76 TRANSFORMERS: FALL OF CYBERTRON
- 78 THE LAST STORY
- 79 THE SECRET WORLD
- 80 THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

MINI-REVIEWS

- 82 Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure
- 82 Adidas miCoach
- 83 Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII
- 83 Persona 4 Arena



Hey, meet the crew!

@GAMER wants you to know about the best-of-the-best games out now or coming soon, so we've put together a different kind of Geek Squad to help you out.

This month, we ask the gamer panel:

In remembrance of Labor Day, who's this year's hardest-working game character?



Charlie Barratt

Isn't it always the plumber? Mario stars in another six games this year, on three separate systems, across four genres. Luigi, meanwhile? Still scared of ghosts.



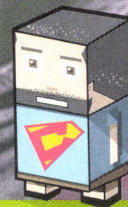
David Chapman

I've got to go with Tom Nook from the *Animal Crossing* series. The guy not only runs a successful store, but he's also a mover in real estate and construction.



Casey DeFreitas

With three *Resident Evil* titles, *Lollipop Chainsaw*, *ZombiU*, and even more, the zombie has had a lot to deal with this year. It's such hard work to get those tasty brains!



Chuck Osborn

For probably the 30th year in a row, it's Mario. He's thrown a Party, competed in the 2012 Olympic Games, played in the Tennis Open, and is launching Wii U later this year.



NOT PICKS

There weren't any games that didn't make the @GAMER cut this issue!

MADDEN NFL 13

Finally, a *Madden* that lets you play as Madden • Words: Andrew Hayward

Each new *Madden NFL* entry is seemingly touted as some major reinvention of core features, but as with football itself, improving this long-standing simulation is a game of inches. Indeed, *Madden NFL 13* has an array of small additions and enhancements, some of which it shares with *NCAA Football 13*—such as new quarterback dropback animations and faster ball releases, plus AI defenders that no longer have a psychic intuition toward unseen incoming passes.

For all but the most die-hard fans, however, the latest *Madden* plays much like last year's, and the one before that: It's a reliably great sim that finds a solid balance between accessibility and veteran-oriented complexity. Rather than mess with that winning formula, EA Sports opted to use *Madden NFL 13* to reshape many of the

elements around the core game, starting with the Connected Careers mode.

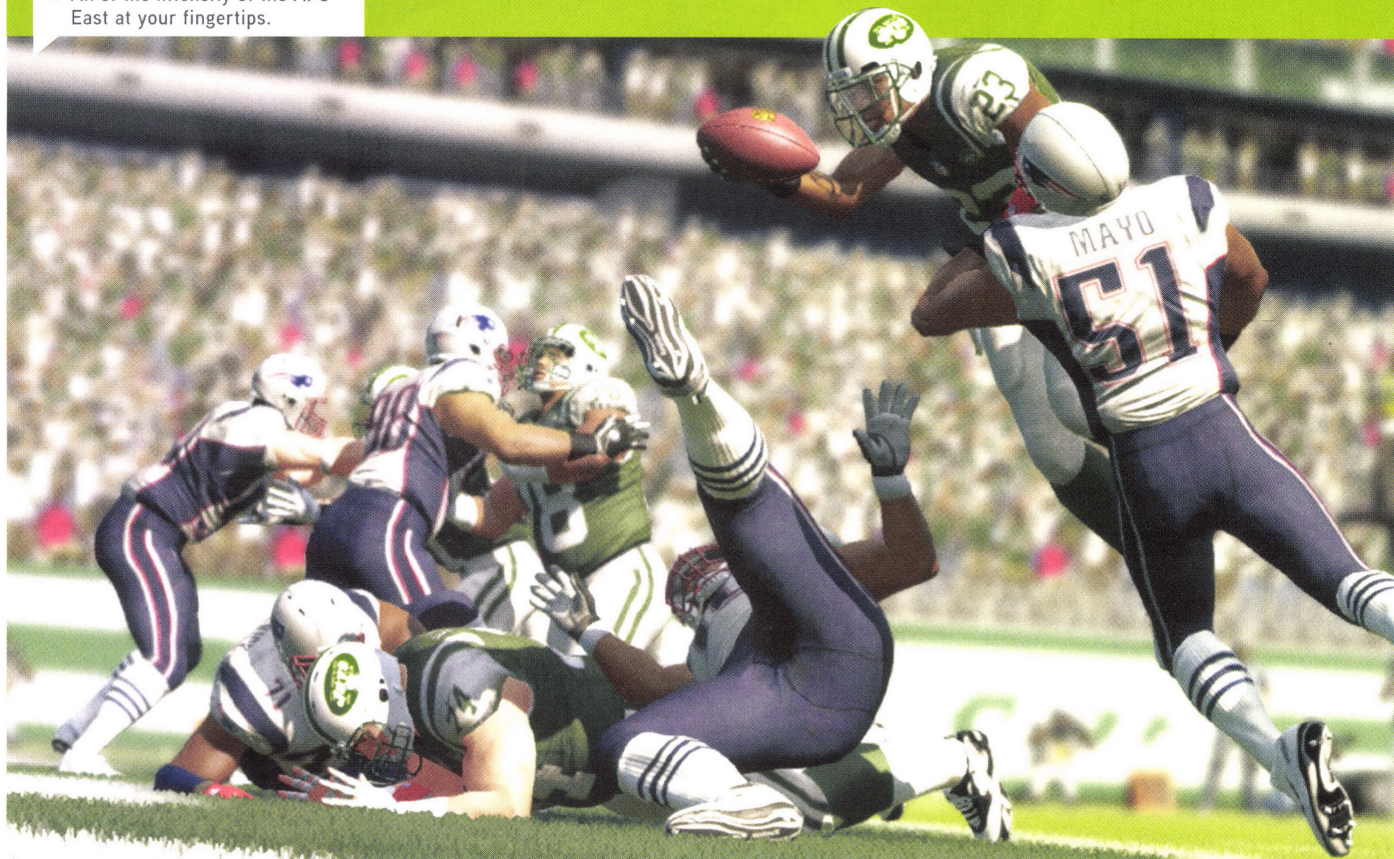
Essentially a mash-up of the previous Franchise, Online Franchise, and Superstar modes, Connected Careers lets you create or choose one player or coach—including several NFL legends on both ends—and try to create an NFL dynasty. Experience points are earned through practice and in-game feats, which can be used to improve your player's skills or give your team an edge in contract negotiations. Bundled up with fake Twitter comments from real-life personalities and a bit more aesthetic flair, Connected Careers feels like a more involved and invested way

to take in the game—and you can even retire and switch to another player/coach without scrapping the entire league.

Madden NFL 13's new Infinity Engine aims to deliver more realistic on-field interactions, but it's clearly a work in progress. The lack of canned in-game hits is a plus, but at times the engine delivers some truly awkward-looking catches and reactions, plus recycled visual elements and animations from past years make for an inconsistent visual experience. As ever, the series is strong, but still has aspects worth improving—a perpetual need that keeps this franchise feeling fresh each year. ☉

IMPROVING THIS LONG-STANDING SIMULATION IS A GAME OF INCHES

▼ All of the intensity of the AFC East at your fingertips.





▲ Frank Gore is a hard man to catch, let alone tackle.

VIVA LA VITA? \\\

A PlayStation Vita version of Madden NFL 13 launches on the same date as the console release, but it lacks Connected Careers and other headline features of the home versions. Instead, it's more akin to an enhanced version of Madden NFL 12, albeit with updated rosters. It's the first Madden on Vita, so hopefully next year's release will mirror the console features.



▲ The Vita version doesn't include the enhanced player physics of the console release (pictured here).

FRESH FACES \\\

Madden NFL 13 makes the surprising move of ditching its existing commentary team in favor of Jim Nantz and Phil Simms, the team behind most Sunday games on the CBS network. The new pairing works well, as they have a comfortable rapport and toss interesting little asides into the mix, though the in-game versions you'll see aren't always matched up well with the audio.



▲ Simms and Nantz are only seen for a moment, but the CBS announcing crew is heard throughout the game.



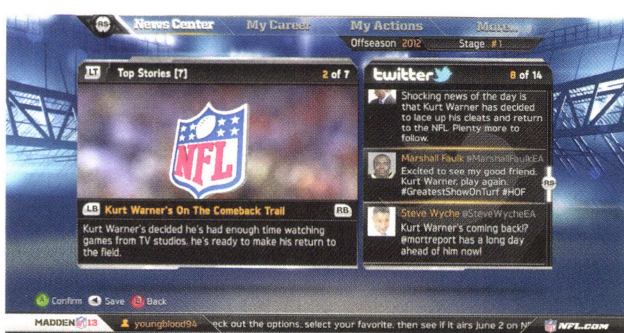
- ▲ Create or choose any player—including all current and several former ones—and then guide him through his career.



- ▲ Madden Ultimate Team is back, letting you build teams with cards and then battle it out on the field, online or off.



- ▲ John Madden—the man behind the brand—joins several other classic coaches, alongside most active ones.



- ▲ A Twitter feed serves up relevant fake tweets from real-life personalities as your career progresses each week.

- ▼ The new animations don't always look this refined.





▲ He's no superhero, but Chris Johnson is pretty amazing.



SOCIAL STRATEGIZING \\\

Need another way to get your football fix? EA Sports' free-to-play Madden NFL Social launches on Facebook and iOS this fall, serving up a new take on the franchise that can be played with friends from nearly anywhere. Turn-based matches are at the core of the action, plus you can beef up your squad with players from the Auction House.

IN THE GAME \\\

BETTER WITH KINECT \\\

Many controller-based games simply don't live up to the "Better With Kinect" marketing tag, but Madden NFL 13 is one of the rare exceptions. Luckily, the Xbox 360 version of the game doesn't try to make you stand up and execute exaggerated motions to catch the motion-sensing peripheral's attention. Instead, it offers up a subtle and truly smart enhancement to the traditional experience.

In Madden NFL 13, Kinect is utilized only for on-the-field voice commands. Before the snap on offense, for example, you can call out "Audible" and then say "Run" or "Deep Pass" to swap to one of those plays. Similarly, defensive adjustments can be made on the fly, along with hot routes, plus you can call a time out or challenge when the moment is right. The voice commands are responsive and helpful, making them a nice optional bonus for Kinect owners.



PS3 XBOX 360
Wii PS VITA



MADDEN NFL 13

INFO

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360,
Wii, PS Vita
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

August 28, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 6-player online,
4-player local

GENRE

Sports

SUITABLE FOR

Pigskin enthusiasts,
NFL historians



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Connected Careers delivers a more involved experience
- ♥ Reliably strong gameplay and modes



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Infinity Engine delivers some awkward animations
- ✗ Many peripheral visual elements need a refresh



CHARLIE SAYS:

Player-on-player collisions look more realistic—thanks to better physics simulation—but there's still room to improve it.

OVERALL RATING:

4.25



@gamer

▼ Death is a powerhouse right from the start—obtaining new skills merely supplements his abilities.



GAME
OF THE
MONTH

DARKSIDERS II

Death brings this fantastical world to life • Words: Ryan Taljonick

Talk to anyone who played *Darksiders* and they'll tell you it's like *Zelda* and *God of War* had a baby, and fused that baby with *Devil May Cry*. As this implies, it never really seemed to achieve recognition for being its own thing—its parts, it seemed, were greater than the whole.

But that "whole" constructed a sturdy foundation for *Darksiders II*, an action-adventure game built around wonderfully intelligent dungeon design and flashy combo-driven combat. As Death, the fourth horseman of the apocalypse, you'll encounter plenty of beautiful (and beautifully varied) environments on your journey to help War, who has been wrongfully accused of bringing about the premature destruction of mankind. Some of these environments exist in the form of complex, challenging dungeons, while the expansive worlds you'll

explore provide impressive vistas and plenty of hidden treasures worth seeking.

Of course, exacting hot, nasty vengeance means you'll have to do a lot of killing—Death is a no-nonsense kind of guy—and the combat system in *Darksiders II* is far more engaging than the original's.

I FELT LIKE I WAS WATCHING A BEAUTIFUL DANCE OF DESTRUCTION

For starters, Death, unlike War, can level up and obtain new skills through two different talent trees. A melee-centric branch offers enhanced attacks, while a magic

tree offers the ability to summon ferocious ghouls and flocks of birds that stab bad guys to death with their beaks. Brutal. These skills were often useful, but they never became a crutch—survival required a decent understanding of when to slash, dodge, smash, and counter. The combat animations are impressive, too. As I cut my way through hordes of enemies, it felt like I was watching a beautiful dance of destruction choreographed to the astounding orchestral score of Jesper Kyd (of *Assassin's Creed* fame).

Indeed, *Darksiders II* is about vengeance in more ways than one; it manages to pull off what its predecessor could not by forging an identity. It's not a *Zelda* clone, a *God of War* rip-off, or a *Devil May Cry* wannabe. It's *Darksiders*, and it fights tooth and nail to earn recognition as an experience all its own—and boy does it succeed. ☺



▲ Secondary weapons, such as this sledgehammer, make for interesting combos.

SHOW 'EM WHO'S BOSS \\\

Darksiders II kept me on my toes by consistently introducing newer, tougher enemies intent on ending my quest for redemption. Of particular note are the boss battles, especially the optional ones. My fight with the Deposed King—the towering ice giant above—was a grueling one. Just one misstep meant death for Death. I learned the hard way (on several occasions) that a homerun swing from his hulking hammer would smash me into a sinewy pulp.



CRYPT-IC

DUNGEONS BY DESIGN

Like in the original *Darksiders*, completing puzzle-laden dungeons is a highlight. These became increasingly challenging as I acquired new skills.

Gaining access to the Deathgrip spell—essentially a grappling hook—or the ability to summon controllable spirits meant I suddenly had to be on the lookout for previously unreachable hook points or switches, opening up expansive new areas of levels I'd already explored. These were full of treasures or hidden bosses that often dropped powerful weapons upon defeat. Even side-quest dungeons were surprisingly vast and complex.



QUEST-IONABLE //

The biggest weakness of *Darksiders II* is that its convoluted story is full of menial fetch quests. While these often led to interesting places or intense enemy encounters, the motivations behind them felt shallow. Yes, Death's journey to clear his brother's name is a noble and selfless one, but it involves a lot of NPCs who request multiple favors only to reward you with a small piece of a giant puzzle. At least there are plenty of rewards along the way to dull the pain.

01 NEED A LIFT?

Shatter a foe's defenses by comboing into an aerial assault.

02 NICE BOOTS

The +30 to strength from these boots will give your strikes some extra oomph.

03 SOLID SWING

Now that the enemy's vulnerable, finish it off with a scythe-tacular slash.



▲ "Need this key? No problem—but first, can you risk your life to pick a flower so I can give it to my girlfriend? Thanks!"



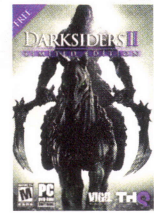
▲ Some quest givers will actually give you a helping hand by lifting gates or activating switches.





AN AXE TO GRIND \\\

Eviscerating enemies may be one of Death's favorite pastimes, but doing so also yields tangible rewards. There's tons of loot to be found in *Darksiders II*, and I loved finding a constant stream of new weapons and armor. Best of all, I didn't have to dig through the game's unbearably slow menus to adorn new gear—every bit of loot can be quickly compared to equipped items via a small pop-up window, and swapping for upgrades is done with the simple push of a button. Oddly enough, the pop-up window didn't showcase which stats I'd lose as a tradeoff, an admittedly strange omission that occasionally, albeit rarely, forced me to the menu screens.



DARKSIDERS II

INFO

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Vigil Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC, Wii U
Reviewed on: PS3

RELEASE DATE

August 14, 2012
(Wii U: Fall 2012)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Collectible-hoarding completionists, loot hounds, end-times historians



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Complex, intelligent dungeon design
- ♥ Excellent pacing, combat, and soundtrack



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Convoluted story with eye-rolling fetch quests
- ✗ Long load times, lots of texture pop-in, occasionally wonky camera



ANDY SAYS:

A few months ago, I tried the game out, and thought it was too busy. Looks like it's been improved in time for release.



OVERALL RATING:

4.25



▲ Who knew that giant snake things would be interested in playing with doll houses?

▼ Want to find all of the game's secrets and treasures? Enlist an extra set of eyes with Luigi co-op.

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2



All that glitters is (mostly) gold • Words: Charlie Barratt

One glance at the game's box—or at the shimmering artwork above these words—will tell you, in an instant, what makes *New Super Mario Bros. 2* special and different from the over dozen Mario platformers that came before. Gold. Gold, gold, gold. And then some more gold.

So much gold, everywhere and in everything, that "ridiculous" is the only word I can think of to describe it. Stand in the right spot and gold coins materialize out of thin air. Hit the right switch and gold coins splash out of warp pipes as if they were water fountains. Jump through the right ring and enemies become gold, then toss gold coins out like beads in a Mardi Gras parade.

Collect the right power-up and Mario himself transforms into a glittering god shooting solid-gold fireballs that, yep, leave only gold coins in their wake. For someone who grew up with the original *Super Mario* games and remembers rummaging through brick blocks and underground sewers for a bit of extra change, "giddy" is the only word I can use to describe how the bounty here made me feel.

That sense of gleeful satisfaction is reward enough for playing, which is lucky, because *New Super Mario Bros. 2* doesn't do the best job of building incentives for you to rack up all those riches. Grab one coin in a level, or hundreds—other than comparing to scores on your 3DS buddy list, the number

doesn't really have an impact. Even a million (which would require several runs through the game) will only unlock a sort-of special start screen. The co-op is both spectacularly entertaining and slightly disappointing as well. I loved searching for secrets with a friend-controlled Luigi, but being forced onto a single screen despite having two separate systems? Not as much.

Take away the shiny gimmick or the extra multiplayer, however, and you're still left with the typically excellent 2D platforming perfected by this series over the course of nearly three decades, now enhanced with lovely layers of 3D depth. Nintendo hasn't lost its touch, golden or otherwise. **D**



YOU'VE GOT YOUR 3D IN MY 2D!

Like the first New Super Mario Bros. on DS, this sequel is designed as a throwback to the classic side-scrolling platformers on NES and SNES. It's isn't a fully 3D game, but more of a layered 3D pop-up storybook.



MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING

A This screenshot costs as much as your house. An ordinary Mario game would have those coins in the middle, sure, but not the golden Koopas and golden Piranha Plants, who also hand out money like slot machines. Trying to collect everything you see in every level is an addictive and dizzying experience...

B ...until you realize that none of that effort really matters. You don't need coins to unlock new areas of the map, or even 1-Up Mushrooms (the game's so generous that I had over 200 lives halfway through). Collecting, then, becomes more of a personal challenge, which is fine when the platforming is this finely tuned.

3DS

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS 12



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

INFO

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo EAD
Platforms: 3DS

RELEASE DATE

August 19, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player local co-op

GENRE

Platformer

SUITABLE FOR

Retro nostalgia with a technological twist you never could have imagined in the '80s or '90s



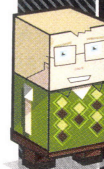
WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Mario has the Midas touch, turning every level into a game show of fun and prizes
- ♥ Subtle 3D adds depth, not distraction, to classic 2D



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ No real incentive for collecting all those coins
- ✗ A little too short and easy



RYAN SAYS:

Now that I'm finally finished with *Super Mario 3D Land*, I'm eager to jump back into a new 2D coin-collecting adventure.

OVERALL RATING:

4



©Gamer



▲ Nothing about this screen remotely resembles any real-life police procedure, anywhere, ever.

SLEEPING DOGS

Release the hounds • Words: Ryan Scott

Some games steal; other games steal really well. *Sleeping Dogs*—formerly known as *True Crime: Hong Kong*, before Square Enix rescued it from Activision's development graveyard—finally arrives on shelves after a three-year wait, and it plays like a greatest-hits album for the beloved games that it shamelessly (and successfully) rips off.

Let me put it this way: The exploits of Wei Shen—a police detective who goes perhaps a bit too deep undercover in his assignment to take down a civil-war-torn Triad gang—would fit snugly into the *Grand Theft Auto* canon. He's basically a cross-section of the coolest gaming cats (errr, dogs) of the last few years. Shen takes his mission cues from the *GTA* series (and others like it), he fights like *Batman*, shoots bad guys like *Max Payne*, leaps and bounds across environments like

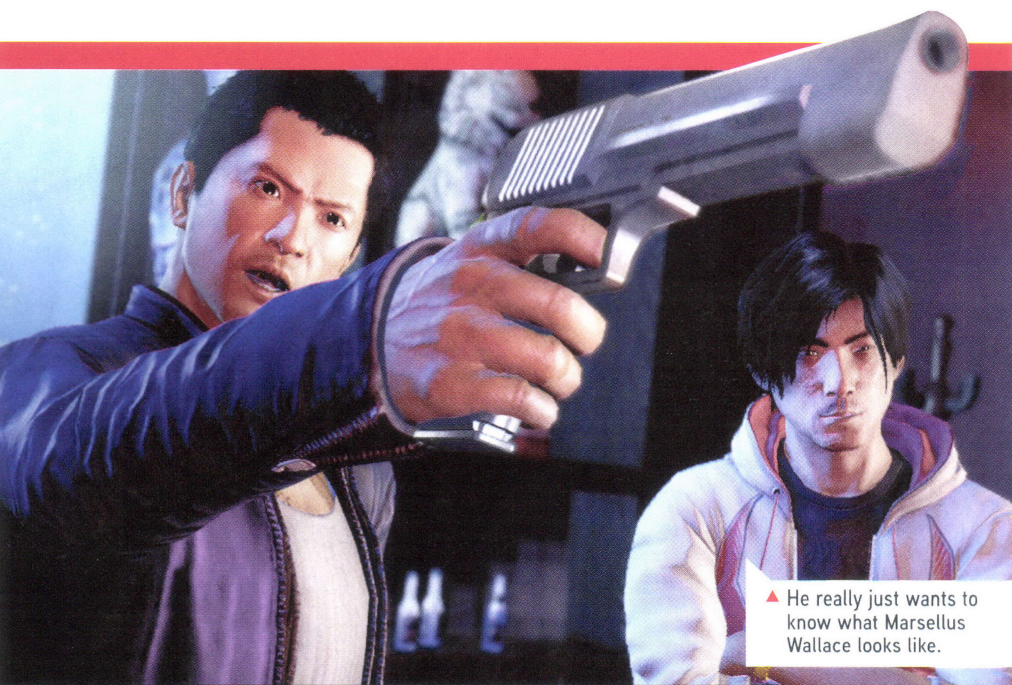
any of *Assassin's Creed's* agile protagonists, burns rubber like a *Need for Speed* street racer, and he even hacks computers a little bit like *Splinter Cell's* Sam Fisher.

In action, *Sleeping Dogs* is a Frankenstein's monster of good ideas, well-executed and wrapped around a cautionary tale about going too far down the proverbial rabbit hole. Shen's conflicting loyalties manifest themselves as separate experience point tracks, which gradually unlock various police- and Triad-oriented combat abilities as you complete missions for either side. And beyond those story-specific obligations, you get the requisite spate of extracurricular side quests, collectibles, customizable

gangsta-wear, and off-the-reservation terrorism opportunities that you'd expect from an open-world game. Heck, you can even sing karaoke (via a crude timing-based note track) if the mood happens to strike. And it all unfolds in a well-designed and deceptively sprawling East Asian city (obviously meant to be Hong Kong, but, you know, not really).

So, this puts me in the curious position of giving a solid thumbs-up to one of the least original—yet most entertaining—games I've played all year. *Sleeping Dogs* may not have many new tricks, but it can still sit, stay, roll over, and bend a guy's leg the wrong way with the best of 'em. ●

IT'S A FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER OF GOOD IDEAS



▲ He really just wants to know what Marsellus Wallace looks like.

HEY, IT'S THAT GUY! \\\

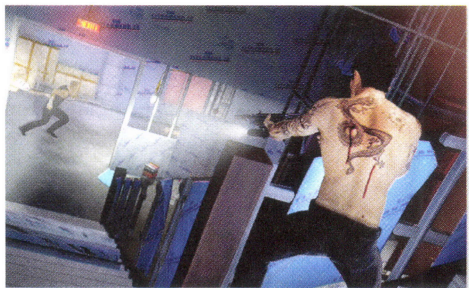
Sleeping Dogs' cast features a who's who of well-known actors and obscure nerd-circle celebs. We're graced by the vocal talents of Tom Wilkinson, Lucy Liu, Emma Stone, James Hong (aka *Big Trouble in Little China's* Lo Pan), Kelly Hu (aka *X-Men 2's* Lady Deathstrike), Yunjin Kim (aka *Lost's* Sun-Hwa Kwon), and Robin Shou (aka the *Mortal Kombat* film adaptation's Liu Kang).



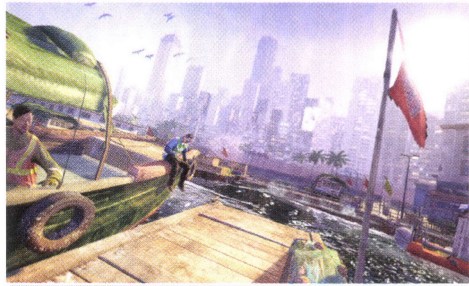
▲ The only game where you play a cop who commandeers a motorcycle by throwing its occupant onto the pavement.



▲ Yep, that's right, boys—we're going paintballin'. Except, with bullets.



▲ Just a peacekeeping officer of the law, sir. No cause for alarm. Don't mind the scary Triad tattoos.

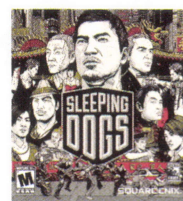


▲ One day maybe you'll get to retire from this undercover mobster life and become a simple fisherman.



▲ She recommends the rib-eye cut (i.e. a rib jammed through your eye).

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



SLEEPING DOGS

INFO

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: United Front Games/
Square Enix London
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC
Reviewed on: PS3

RELEASE DATE

August 14, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Open-world criminals who don't mind "borrowing" parts here and there



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ A melting pot of good ideas from other games
- ♥ Exotic, well-made setting
- ♥ Lots of stuff to do outside of missions (even karaoke!)



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Checkpoints aren't always well-implemented
- ✗ Street races can get tough



CHARLIE SAYS:

Sleeping Dogs has had a long, tortured history—and a few different names—but the wait was more than worthwhile.

OVERALL RATING:

4.25



gamer

▼ Angel (below left) and Michelle Chang are bonus fighters available through pre-ordering the game.



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

The bare essentials, and a playable bear • Words: Michael Grimm

That old chestnut "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" masks an underlying criticism: How long can something that doesn't change remain competitive, even if it still works just fine? While *Street Fighter IV* deftly blended nostalgia with innovative new mechanics, *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* sticks mostly to what it knows.


The mechanics are borrowed directly from *Tekken 6*, and as always, juggle-heavy combination moves are the centerpiece. Surprisingly, I found the tag system did little to dramatically alter basic gameplay, though the Tag Assault feature allows for some huge combos. Of course, huge combos require huge skills, so rookie players will likely only tag when a character is low on health.

A huge roster of over 50 characters includes almost everyone who's ever been in a *Tekken* game, giving you a massive

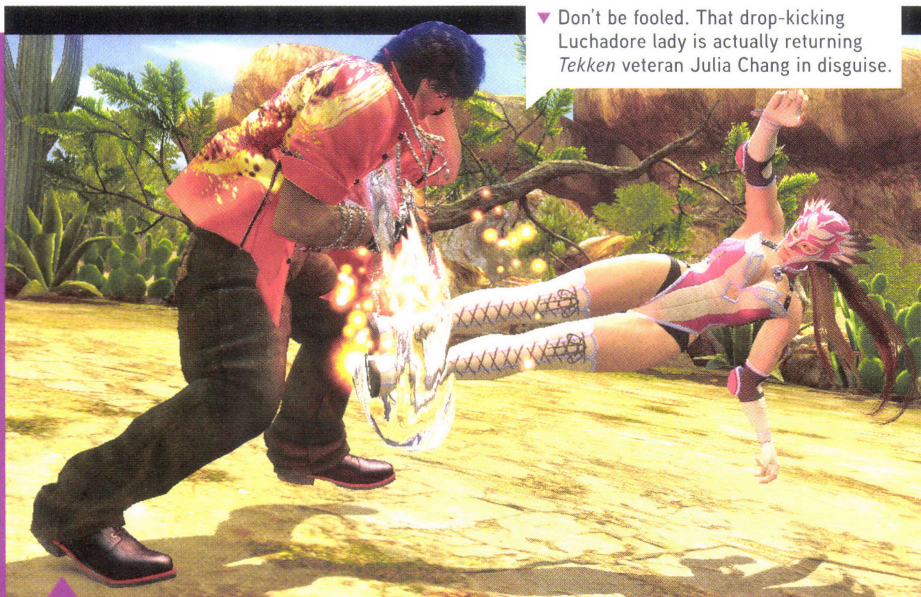
pool to select from. Their models look great and are animated well, but even by the high standard of other Japanese fighting games, *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* is exceptionally wacky. Winning matches earns money to customize characters with, and before long I was playing as a kangaroo with an assault rifle and a siren on his head. While I appreciated the non-stop zaniness, some players may find it to be a bit much.

My favorite feature is the Fight Lab, a tutorial serving double duty as both a story mode and character creator. Progressing through it teaches you the basics and

enables you to customize a playable robot with your favorite moves. The mode is too short, though, with only a few chapters, but the missions get increasingly more difficult with each completion, encouraging replays.

Tekken Tag Tournament 2's biggest stumble is its dearth of compelling single-player content; unless you're interested in playing dress up with Kazuya or tinkering with Combot, you won't find much here to hold your interest. The game's total focus on gameplay is fine for hardcore fans, but with so many staple features missing, it's difficult to recommend to more casual players. 

**BEFORE LONG I WAS PLAYING AS A
KANGAROO WITH AN ASSAULT RIFLE
AND A SIREN ON HIS HEAD**



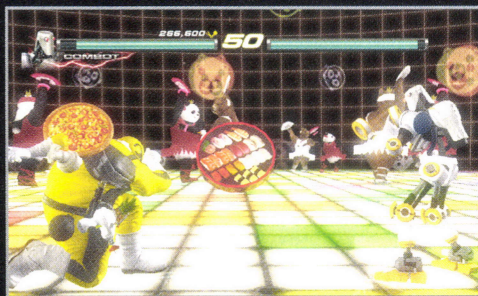
▼ Don't be fooled. That drop-kicking Luchadore lady is actually returning Tekken veteran Julia Chang in disguise.

NON-LINE //

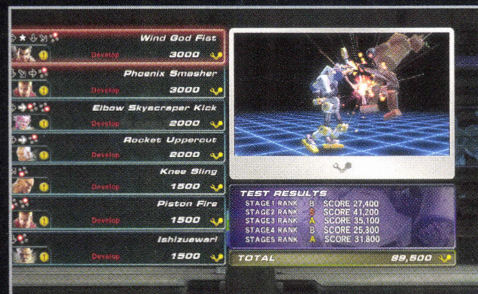
While Tekken Tag Tournament 2's multiplayer was tested extensively for this review, online servers were not optimized by press time—note that the analysis here represents offline content only. Of course, online is a big part of any fighting game, so we'll bring you our thoughts in the next issue, and adjust the overall review score if we feel online multiplayer adds or detracts to the experience significantly enough.



▲ Prototype Jack is in trouble with the EPA for breaking the Law; he keeps cutting down Forrest.



▲ Tekken Tag isn't afraid to get wacky, including custom items such as pizzas, sushi, and guns.

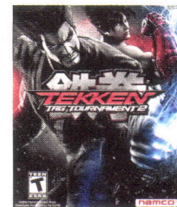


▲ Fight Lab is a weird hybrid of story and tutorial modes that actually works better than you'd expect.



The roster features almost every previous Tekken character, from Alex to Zafina.

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

INFO

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Namco Bandai
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U
Reviewed on: PS3

RELEASE DATE

September 11, 2012
(Wii U: Fall 2012)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player online or local

GENRE

Fighting

SUITABLE FOR

Jugglers and wacky outfit enthusiasts



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Massive roster of characters
- ♥ Fight Lab mashes multiple modes together
- ♥ Insane customization options



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Bare-bones single-player
- ✗ Impact of tagging is minimal for Tekken rookies
- ✗ No universal commands for essential moves



RYAN SAYS:

As a casual fighting game player, hardcore complexity turns me off a bit. Might have to pass on this one.

OVERALL RATING:

3.25



Gamer

TRANSFORMERS: FALL OF CYBERTRON

High Moon proves it's got the touch with this high-octane sequel • Words: David Chapman

No self-respecting child of the '80s could resist 2010's *Transformers: War for Cybertron*. The toys were translated so well into action game heroes that the only thing fans were left wondering by the end was how developer High Moon Studios could possibly top itself for a sequel. *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron*'s answer? Make it bigger, make it badder, and throw in some Dinobots for good measure.

At first glance, you'll likely notice what didn't make the cut this time around. The Autobot and Decepticon stories are no longer split into two separate campaigns and friends can't help you through the story,

as the original's campaign co-op is missing. Keep playing, though, and you'll see that *Fall of Cybertron* offers much more than meets the eye. (Sorry, couldn't resist.)

On the single-player side, High Moon has crafted a more cohesive narrative that towers over its predecessor's in epic Metroplex-sized scale. In addition, Teletran-1 kiosks spread throughout the game enable you to spend energon to upgrade and equip your favorite weapons, tech, and perks, which in turn gives you the opportunity to customize your loadout to suit your individual style of play. And thanks to rechargeable energy shields now coming

as standard equipment on all Transformers, you can remain in the firefight for even longer than before.

Multiplayer got a bit of an overhaul, too (see "Till All Are One" sidebar), which will keep you coming back long after the campaign has run out of gas. But the best thing about *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron* is that the game is both fully loaded with fan service for diehards and very accessible for franchise newcomers. Can't tell an Autobot from a Go-Bot? As long as you like games with big robots, fast cars (and planes), and even faster action, then there's definitely something here for you. ☺



Me Grimlock!
The fan favorite gets a new story to explain the Dinobots' forms.

Computer Bug
Cybertron's locusts swarm in as Insecticons take flight.

BIGGER, BADDER, AND NOW WITH DINOBOOTS



▲ Got to call in the big guns? They don't get much bigger than city-turned-Autobot, Metroplex.

HEAVY METAL \\\ Whether sneaking through the shadows as the diminutive Cliffjumper, stomping on Autobots as the Combaticon combiner Bruticus, or calling in artillery strikes from the massive behemoth Metroplex, *Fall of Cybertron* never fails to capture the size and scope of its characters.

BATTLE BOTS \\\



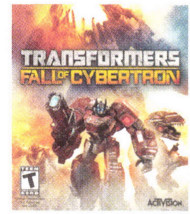
TILL ALL ARE ONE \\\

Fall of Cybertron has five different multiplayer modes. Escalation brings teams of up to four players together against waves of opposing troops, while more competitive types can duke it out in standard Team Deathmatch, Conquest, and Capture the Flag. Finally, Headhunter games combine CTF and Deathmatch, with players hunting the opposing team and scoring by bringing their remaining sparks back to base.



▲ Sometimes you've just got to burn a little rubber to survive the space between Points A and B.

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



TRANSFORMERS: FALL OF CYBERTRON

INFO

Publisher: Activision
Developer: High Moon Studios
(PS3, Xbox 360); Mercenary
Technology (PC)
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

August 21, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 10-player competitive,
4-player online co-op

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

Anyone who still gets goose-
bumps whenever they hear
"The Touch"



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Lots of customization and upgrades available for your personalized Transformer
- ♥ Smooth, robust multiplayer options add replay value
- ♥ Dinobots!



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ No co-op play in campaign



CHARLIE SAYS:

I didn't play with Transformers as a kid, but this is a game for fans of huge action, not just huge toy robots. Count me in.



OVERALL RATING:

4.25

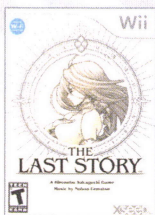




Wii



GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



THE LAST STORY

INFO

Publisher: XSEED Games

Developer: Mistwalker

Platforms: Wii

RELEASE DATE

August 14, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 6-player online

GENRE

RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Final Fantasy fans who still know how to turn on their Wii's

WHAT'S GREAT:

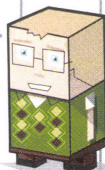
- ♥ Inventive storytelling
- ♥ Fresh approach to classic RPG combat
- ♥ Perhaps the last great game for the Nintendo Wii

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Wii's graphics are really showing their age
- ✗ Still guilty of a few tropes

RYAN SAYS:

As a huge fan of Sakaguchi's work, I can't wait to dive into his latest JRPG!



OVERALL RATING:

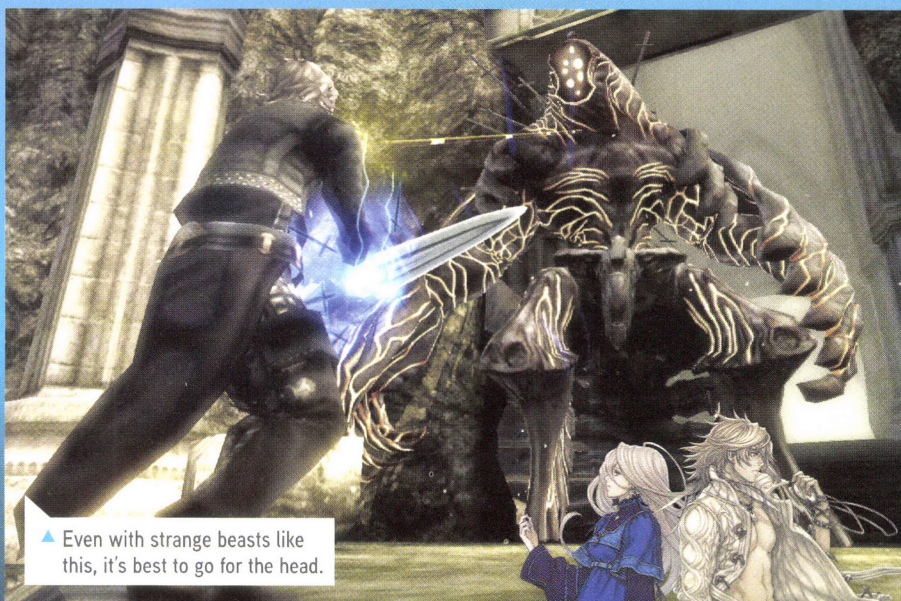
4



Gamer

THE LAST STORY

A final fantasy for the Wii • Words: Henry Gilbert

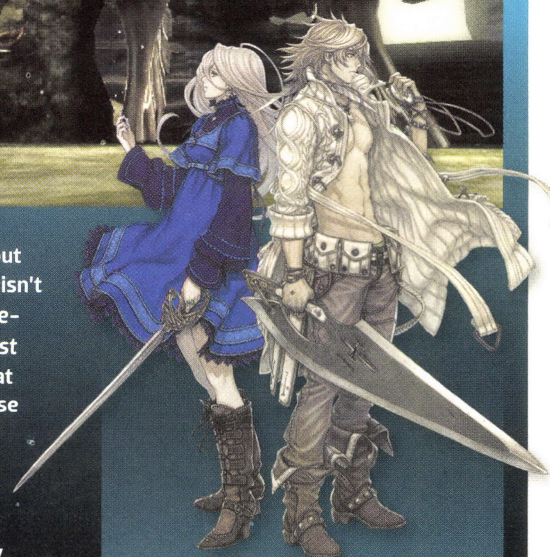


▲ Even with strange beasts like this, it's best to go for the head.

The Wii may be in its twilight years, but games this good prove the console isn't dead yet. A classically styled RPG developed by *Final Fantasy* veterans, *The Last Story* is a creative convention-breaker that impressively defies how niche the Japanese roleplaying genre has become. And while the story and setting are immediately reminiscent of Square Enix's famously never-ending franchise, it's most like *Final Fantasy* in its commitment to quality.

The Last Story's fantastical world is grounded by a human story, following hero Zael and his team of mercenaries as they're caught between warring states amidst a captivating amount of political intrigue. While this is basically still the usual "what am I fighting for?" RPG journey, it's told in an especially fluid way that connects cut-scenes and action seamlessly. However, gameplay is where *The Last Story* really changes the formula, bridging the gap between real-time combat and turn-based strategy in unexpected ways. Each fight is a dynamic engagement, made impressively complex with a cover system and Zael's unique Gathering ability, which draws fire to him from the rest of his squad mates.

Both nostalgically familiar and excitingly novel, *The Last Story* is a much-needed breath of fresh air for the sometimes stale RPG genre... and a final, fantastic treat for the aging Wii. ●



EXPLORING WITH FRIENDS //

The Last Story's multiplayer is no simple curiosity. The 3-on-3 PvP battles are fun, but it's the 6-player boss challenges that best highlight the combat, demanding teamwork and communication at every turn.



▲ No waiting your turn in this RPG. You need to take sword to flesh fast.



◀ The Templars, Illuminati, and Dragon fight on the same side when it comes to defeating evil. Two heads? Yep, definitely evil.

THE SECRET WORLD

Myths and legends come to life • Words: Chuck Osborn

In many ways, *The Secret World* is unlike any MMO you've ever played. Set in modern times, it depicts a gorgeous, moody world in which three secret societies—the Illuminati, the Templars, and the Dragon—vie to protect the Earth from the paranormal underbelly of everyday existence, a "secret world" in which all conspiracies, mythical beings, and urban legends are inexplicably true. Written with keen wit and adult sensibility, *The Secret World* is closer thematically and stylistically to Funcom's adventure *Dreamfall* than it is to the company's previous MMOs.

For starters, character development is purely skill-based without classes or obvious levels, allowing you to configure your own unique avatar from a wide, and sometimes confusing, array of talents and abilities. Quests range from the usual "kill x of y" slaughterfests to more refreshing fare, such as stealth missions and brain-twisting investigation quests that are so reliant on adventure gaming and puzzle-solving that there's actually an in-game web browser to research and/or look up walkthroughs.

But even with all the zombies, vampires, werewolves, and other occult beasts to kill, *The Secret World* has its downsides. Combat—whether it's magic, melee, or ranged weapon—is underwhelming, and there are few differences in abilities between the three sides until you reach higher skill levels. Weirdest of all, grouping and PvP take a back seat to soloing, especially early on, which is a big negative if you play MMOs socially. Whether you're willing to pony up the \$14.99 a month subscription may depend on if you enjoy a massively single-player experience. ☺



▲ Players can form groups called "cabals" to fight threats too deadly for one character.

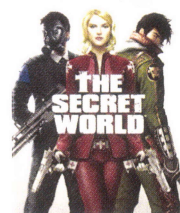
THE CONTINUING WORLD //

Due to a focus on story-driven quests, early players exhausted the game's content quickly. In response, Funcom announced monthly updates that will expand the world with new missions and weapons, more character customization, enhanced combat, and better emphasis on multiplayer, including raids, more PvP dungeons, and a grouping tool for dungeons.



PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



THE SECRET WORLD

INFO

Publisher: EA/Funcom
Developer: Funcom
Platforms: PC

RELEASE DATE

July 3, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

MMORPG

GENRE

MMORPG

SUITABLE FOR

Conspiracy theorists, occultists, and MMO players tired of fantasy, superheroes, and sci-fi

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Plot-driven, investigative quests challenge your mind
- ♥ No character classes or defined levels gives more gameplay freedom

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ At the moment, does little to encourage PvP or grouping

ANDY SAYS:

It's great to see companies taking chances with concepts that you don't usually see in MMOs. I hope the game sticks around.

OVERALL RATING:

3.75



atgamer

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii
3DS DSTHE AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN

INFO

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Beenox
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii,
3DS, DS
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

June 26, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Armchair superheroes with
plenty of patience and time

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Cruising around the city on a web strand is fast and fun
- ♥ The combat system is like the Batman/Arkham games

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Some action is repetitive; some is plain dull
- ✖ Combat is clunkier than the Batman/Arkham games

CHARLIE SAYS:

Amazing Spider-Man is clearly inspired by Batman's recent treks...but can't surpass them.



OVERALL RATING:

3.25



GAMER

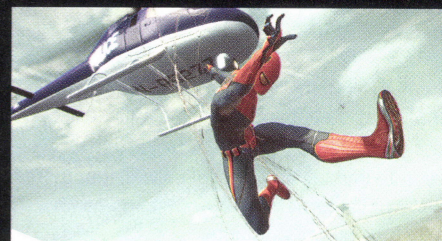
THE AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN

What's good for the Batman is good for the Spider-Man • Words: Andy Eddy

Do you ever wonder if superheroes envy each other? That certainly seems to be the case with Activision's *The Amazing Spider-Man*, which clearly admired Batman enough to take some pages from his "Arkham" books. To that end, it provides similarly chained, combo-driven combat; a healthy component of stealth; and oodles of collectables strewn throughout the game world.

While the additions improve the gameplay in many regards, *The Amazing Spider-Man* simply isn't as polished as its cowed cousin. The web-swinging is entertaining and functional transportation around the giant city, but it sometimes wreaks havoc with the camera to the point that you become disoriented—not a good thing if you're in a tough battle. And while the mechanics are true to Spidey's ability to cling to walls and hang inverted while lying in wait for enemies, all of the upside-down/right-side-up camera flipping can turn your brain inside-out.

It's not to say that *The Amazing Spider-Man* isn't fun, because there are hours of entertainment in there. Rather, it seems that the makers could have made a few of its missions more compelling and improved its boss battles (you often can't tell if you're making progress, which is frustrating). When you find yourself saying, "oh, not this again..." you're not enjoying yourself as much as you should. That's something the Caped Crusader realized a couple of years ago. ☹




▲ Hitching a ride on a copter is chill...but it's also much slower than web-swinging.

SIDE ORDERS \\\

Outside of the main story missions, Spidey fights lots of crime—though it's filled with redundancy and rote gameplay. For instance, clearing this chase takes one button press to latch onto the getaway car, then button mashing to web over the windshield (with a single dodge to avoid passenger-side gunfire).



PUSH START ON A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

 | rewardzone
**GAMERS
CLUB**
[UNLOCKED]

Take your gaming to another level with Reward Zone® Gamers Club Unlocked from Best Buy®. For the price of this magazine subscription, you gain access to exclusive offers, discounts, bonus points and a full year-long subscription to @Gamer.

ALL FOR ONLY \$14.99 PER YEAR.

See a Best Buy Gaming Specialist in store to join Reward Zone Gamers Club Unlocked today.

For Reward Zone Gamers Club Terms & Conditions, please visit MyRZ.com



Mini-Reviews:

CHECK THESE SHORTIES!

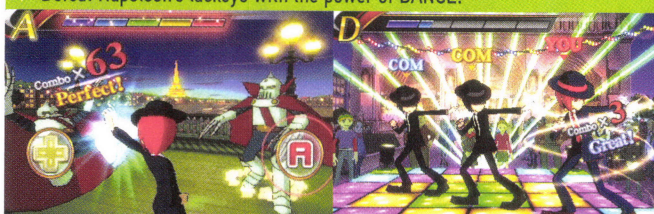
Of course, size doesn't matter. These games are more than worth your attention.



▼ Finding shiny new artifacts drives the story.



▼ Defeat Napoleon's lackeys with the power of DANCE.



RHYTHM THIEF & THE EMPEROR'S TREASURE



Publisher: Sega • Developer: Sega, Xeen • Platforms: 3DS • Words: Casey DeFreitas

Who knew you could fight maniacal Parisians in giant mechanical bodysuits with the power of rhythm?

Rhythm Thief takes a note from Professor Layton's popularity with its beautifully animated cut-scenes and story-driven play. The narrative is propelled by a series of mini-games, all of which have rhythm at their core. The variety of these games is impressive, as each takes advantage of different control schemes available to the 3DS. Some use buttons, some use the touch screen, and others use gyroscopic controls—all of them, however, are equally engaging.

The instructions for these activities are occasionally unclear, but overall the game isn't too difficult. The story is adorably interesting, and there's enough to do to entertain even the most rhythmically challenged. There are even nods to past Sega hits! ☺



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player local

GENRE Rhythm

RELEASE DATE

July 10, 2012

SUITABLE FOR

Rhythm kings and French aficionados

OVERALL RATING:

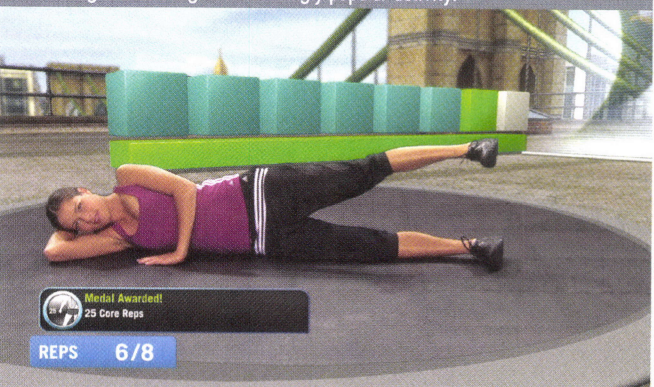
4



▼ Feeling stressed? Punch your fists mid-lunge!



▼ Planking is becoming an increasingly popular activity.



ADIDAS MICOACH



Publisher: 505 Games • Developer: Lightning Fish • Platform: Xbox 360 Kinect, PlayStation Move • Words: Cheryll Del Rosario

There's not much room for major overhauls in the fitness game genre nowadays. You'll always have a character blindly encouraging you to push harder, move faster, or reach further. Adidas miCoach separates itself from the rest with the inclusion of sports-centric exercises, celebrity athlete exercise coaches, and integration with a line of external peripherals (each sold separately, of course).

Former athletes hoping to regain their former skills on the court will find the most use out of adidas miCoach, as the sports-centered exercise programs are where the game shines. I was a decent basketball player in my youth, but the paces Orlando Magic's Dwight Howard put me through easily proved two things: One, I'm not in my youth anymore, and two, anyone performing jump exercises in a studio apartment should proceed with caution. ☺



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only; connects online to track progress

GENRE Sports/Fitness

RELEASE DATE

July 24, 2012

SUITABLE FOR

Soccer moms after street cred

OVERALL RATING:

3



DAMAGE INC. PACIFIC SQUADRON WWII

Publisher: Mad Catz • Developer: Trickstar Games •
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC • Words: Gord Goble

Some flight games force you to digest a 300-page encyclopedia just to get airborne. Others feel like Mario with wings. *Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII* sits comfortably in the middle—a World War II-era shoot-'em-up that's tailor-made for tenderfoots yet delivers a decent physics model and more ordnance than a munitions factory.

In *Damage Inc.*, you don't set waypoints, you don't run out of ammo, and you don't need a map. The bullets—and bombs—start flying almost instantaneously, and won't stop until you're done. Too simplistic? For some, certainly. Yet the flight dynamics (and target-leading) are sophisticated enough that you'll likely need to toss that gamepad and grab the nearest joystick. Luckily, the upscale Xbox 360 "Squadron Leader" edition includes Saitek's Pacific AV8R FlightStick.

The bonus? Eight-player dogfights. Be still my trigger finger. ☺



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online

GENRE Flight

RELEASE DATE

August 28, 2012

SUITABLE FOR

Rookie pilots, non-judgmental veterans, aerial thrill-seekers

OVERALL RATING:

3.5



▼ Not much of a gameplay angle, but it sure looks dramatic.



▼ Don't wanna freak you out, but your cockpit appears to be empty.



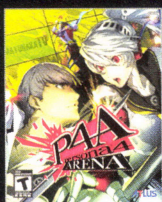
PERSONA 4 ARENA

Publisher: Atlus • Developer: Arc System Works •
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360 • Words: Michael Grimm

A fighting game/JRPG hybrid sounds problematic on paper, but *Persona 4 Arena* comes from Arc System Works, creators of the equally stylistic anime fighters *Guilty Gear* and *BlazBlue*. The comparison to *BlazBlue* doesn't end there, as *P4A* features similar four-button controls and mechanics, while encouraging aggressive, high-speed play.

The game tries, mostly successfully, to blend RPG elements into a fighting game, including status effects, experience points, and a lengthy story. A tutorial mode, single-button combos, and character-specific challenges help ease you into the demanding gameplay. The cast of 13 fighters is small compared to other games in the genre, but each one is unique and requires significant practice to use well.

While the frantic pace and tough technical play may scare away some players, *P4A* is another solid effort from Arc System Works and



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

2-player online or local

GENRE Fighting

RELEASE DATE

August 7, 2012

SUITABLE FOR

ADHD JRPG-ers

OVERALL RATING:

4



▼ Excellent sprite graphics capture every character in smooth detail.



▼ It's amazing what you can get away with in a classroom these days.





Words: Ryan Scott and Casey DeFreitas

DOWNLOAD DIGEST

Interested in downloadable games? @GAMER's dedicated review column covers new titles, episodes, and add-ons to consider for your console and PC.

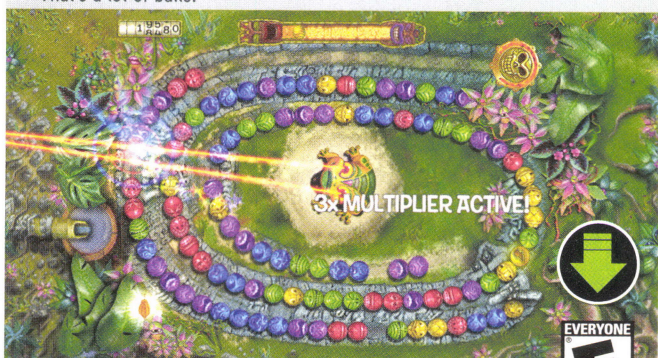
▼ Bats...why'd it have to be bats?



▼ They're digging in the wrong place!



That's a lot of balls.



ZUMA'S REVENGE!

Publisher: PopCap Games • Developer: PopCap Games • Price: \$10 • Platforms: XBLA (July 11, 2012)

Another PopCap time sink, *Zuma's Revenge!*, finds you playing match-three via a frog-shaped ball-shooter as a twisty conga line of colorful spheres slowly bears down on you. Pick your shots shrewdly to line up combos and incur various bonus effects (such as a reverse travel path to buy you more time), and you're well on your way to racking up Zuma's score-based level achievements. While it's not quite as enthralling as *Bejeweled 3* or *Plants vs. Zombies*, PopCap's trademark addictive gameplay is stamped all over it.

OVERALL RATING: 4.0



SPELUNKY

Publisher: Microsoft • Developer: Mossmouth • Price: \$15 • Platforms: XBLA (July 4, 2012)

One of the stalwart champions of independent gaming, developer Derek Yu's sidescrolling action-exploration game *Spelunky* finally delves its way onto consoles, replete with a sizzling visual upgrade. The concept is breezy enough: You play as an ersatz Indiana Jones—fedora, whip, and all—intent on charting the many danger-infested levels of an ancient underground complex. So, off you go, leaping and bounding and bombing your way ever deeper, swatting aggressive cave critters with your whip, and collecting whatever treasures and shiny relics you find along the way.

The trick: *Spelunky* steals a page from the ever-intimidating *Rogue*-like genre. Every excursion plunks you into a newly randomized cavern, and death catapults you all the way back to the entrance. Given your avatar's frailty, it becomes a matter of just how far you can get before you bite the dust (but don't take too much time, lest the level's unkillable ghost spawn as punishment for your dawdling). Lucrative treasures are always waiting to tempt you away from the exit...and sometimes, you don't know just how deadly a given drop might be until you risk it. *Spelunky* is a blast, and quite incomparable to similar games, given the fact that you could theoretically play it forever.

OVERALL RATING: 4.25



Well, nothing can possibly go wrong here...right?



THE WALKING DEAD, EPISODE 2: STARVED FOR HELP

Publisher: Telltale Games • Developer: Telltale Games • Price: \$5 • Platforms: PSN (June 29, 2012), XBLA (June 27, 2012), PC (June 29, 2012)

If I've learned anything from the second episode of Telltale's five-part *Walking Dead* adventure game, it's that I'm a monster: When the zombie apocalypse hits, I'm making sure that seemingly dead guys don't go all undead on me. But as *Starved*'s grisly narrative emphatically demonstrates, I'm straight-up merciful. I'm slowly coming around to *The Walking Dead*'s uniquely cinematic pace...and after this episode, I'm aching to see the drama my choices cause in future installments.

OVERALL RATING: 3.75





QUANTUM CONUNDRUM

Publisher: Square Enix • Developer: Airtight Games • Price: \$15 •
Platforms: PSN (July 11, 2012), XBLA (July 11, 2012),
PC (June 21, 2012)

At first blush, it's easy to assume that *Quantum Conundrum* is a lesser, lazier rehash of designer Kim Swift's other well-known puzzler, *Portal*. "This is just *Portal* with a bunch of box puzzles and not much else," I moaned. I wasn't too crazy about the narrator, either (and I'm still not—he's no GLaDOS, and I often wish he'd just shut it altogether). But, little by little, *Quantum Conundrum* reeled me in until I was fully onboard. It got interesting—even if it took longer than I wanted it to.

Now, *Quantum Conundrum* is just a bunch of box puzzles...but they revolve around the clever use of a dimension-shifting gizmo that can increase or decrease the mass of everything around you, slow down time, and reverse gravity. Couple these dynamics with a funhouse full of deadly lasers, catapults, giant fans, and other crazy contraptions—all of which react differently to your precious boxes in these various dimensions—and you get a vast and challenging puzzle gauntlet that will routinely stump all but the best spatial thinkers. Swift's sophomore effort paints her as a modern puzzlemaster: *Quantum Conundrum* isn't *Portal*, but it'll make you think even harder.

OVERALL RATING: 4.5



Float like a cloud...



...or drop like a rock.



▼ BRAAAAAAIIINNNSSSSSS! And BAAAAAALLLLLSSSSSS!



PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES PINBALL

Publisher: Zen Studios • Developer: Zen Studios/PopCap • Price: \$3 •
Platforms: PSN (September 4, 2012), XBLA (September 5, 2012)

Pinball fanatics won't find better virtual tables than the ones on Zen Studios' *Pinball FX 2* for Xbox 360 and the brand-new *Zen Pinball 2* for PS3. Both replicate the experience, with an analog-controlled ball launcher and machine-nudging controls. And the tables are modular—meaning you can buy only the ones you like. Case in point: The wildly creative *Plants vs. Zombies*, which replicates numerous elements from PopCap's tower defense game. It's a heck of an intro that'll have you poking around for more quality tables in no time flat.

OVERALL RATING: 4.5



▼ I want to suck your...life energy!



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM—DAWGWARD

Publisher: Bethesda • Developer: Bethesda • Price: \$20 •
Platforms: Xbox 360 (June 26, 2012), PC (August 2, 2012)

These threatening vampires don't sparkle in sunlight. Fight them with the *Dawnguard*, or join them and become a vampire lord—complete with a skill tree. It's a meaty campaign that takes at least 10 hours, but this DLC is not just an extra quest line. New weapons have been added, and werewolves get a useful skill tree, too. Horseback combat is also now available, but, unfortunately, doesn't work that well. Overall, *Dawnguard* is satisfying, especially for werewolves and vampires.

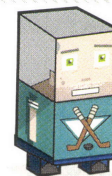
OVERALL RATING: 4.0





A-2

OF @GAMER RATINGS

LOTS
SCORESRANK
HIGH

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
--------------	---------	----------------

A		
Adidas miCoach	22	3.0
The Adventures of Tintin	16	2.5
The Amazing Spider-Man	22	3.25
Armored Core V	18	4.5
Assassin's Creed Revelations	15	4.5
Asura's Wrath	18	3.25

B		
Battlefield 3	15	4.0
Battleship (3DS)	20	2.5
Binary Domain	18	3.5
Birds of Steel	20	4.0
The Black Eyed Peas Experience	16	3.5
Brave: The Video Game	21	3.0
Blades of Time	19	3.0

C		
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	15	4.75
Capcom Digital Collection	18	3.0
Carnival Island	16	3.0
Cartoon Network		
Punch Time Explosion XL	16	2.5
Cooking Mama 4	15	4.25
Crush3D	17	4.0

D		
Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII	22	3.5
The Darkness II	17	4.0
Darksiders II	22	4.25
Dead Rising 2: Off the Record	15	3.0
Devil May Cry HD Collection	19	2.75
Diablo III	21	4.25
Dirt Showdown	20	4.0
Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Tenkaichi	16	2.75
Dragon's Dogma	20	4.0

E		
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	16	5.0
EyePet & Friends	16	2.75

F		
FIFA Street	17	3.75
Final Fantasy XIII-2	17	4.25

G		
Game of Thrones	20	3.0
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	16	3.0
Grand Slam Tennis 2	17	4.0
Gravity Rush	21	4.25

H		
Halo: Combat Evolved Anniversary	16	4.0
Heroes of Ruin	21	3.25
Horses 3D	20	3.75
The House of the Dead: Overkill—Extended Cut	15	3.75

I		
Inversion	20	3.25

J		
Jagged Alliance: Back in Action	18	3.0

K		
Karaoke Revolution Glee: Volume 3	16	4.5

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
--------------	---------	----------------

Kid Icarus: Uprising	19	3.25
Kinect Disneyland Adventures	16	4.5
Kinect Rush	19	4.0
Kinect Sports Season Two	16	3.0
Kinect Star Wars	19	3.75
King of Fighters XIII	16	2.5
Kingdom Hearts 3D [Dream Drop Distance]	21	3.5
Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning	17	4.75
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	16	3.25

L		
The Last Story	22	4.0
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	15	4.5
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	21	4.0
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	16	4.25
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 (Vita)	19	2.5
Lollipop Chainsaw	21	3.0
London 2012—Official Video Game of the Olympic Games	21	2.75
The Lord of the Rings: War in the North	15	3.75

M		
Madden NFL 13	22	4.25
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games (3DS)	18	3.25
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games (Wii)	18	2.75
Mario Kart 7	16	4.0
Mario Party 9	18	4.0
Mario Tennis Open	21	3.5
Mass Effect 3	18	5.0
Max Payne 3	20	4.0
Medieval Moves: Deadmund's Quest	16	3.25
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	17	4.5
Might & Magic Heroes VI	15	3.5
MLB 12 The Show	18	4.5
MLB 2K12	17	3.5
Mortal Kombat (Vita)	19	4.25

N		
NASCAR Unleashed	15	3.5
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	18	3.5
NCAA Football 13	21	4.0
Need For Speed The Run	16	3.5
NeverDead	18	2.5
New Super Mario Bros. 2	22	4.0
Ninja Gaiden 3	18	3.0

O		
Otomedius Excellent	16	2.5

P		
Persona 4 Arena	22	4.0
Pokémon Conquest	21	4.5
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	18	3.0
Pro Evolution Soccer 2012	15	3.5
Prototype 2	18	4.5

R		
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	15	4.0
Raving Rabbids: Alive & Kicking	15	3.25

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
--------------	---------	----------------

Rayman Origins	15	4.5
Resident Evil: Revelations	17	4.0
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	19	2.75
Resistance: Burning Skies	21	3.0
Ridge Racer Unbounded	19	3.25
Risen 2: Dark Waters (PC)	19	3.75
Rhythm Heaven Fever	18	4.5
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	22	4.0

S		
Saints Row: The Third	15	4.25
The Secret World	22	3.75
Serious Sam 3: BFE	16	4.25
Silent Hill Downpour	18	3.5
Silent Hill HD Collection	17	2.75
The Sims 3: Showtime	18	3.5
Sleeping Dogs	22	4.25
Sniper Elite V2	19	3.0
Sonic Generations	15	3.25
Sorcery	20	4.0
Soulcalibur V	17	4.0
Spec Ops: The Line	21	4.0
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	15	4.0
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	19	3.0
SSX	17	4.0
Starhawk	20	4.5
Star Wars: The Old Republic	17	4.5
Steel Battalion Heavy Armor	21	4.0
Street Fighter X Tekken	18	4.0
Super Mario 3D Land	16	4.5
Syndicate	17	4.0

T		
Tales of Graces f	17	4.0
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	17	3.5
Tekken Hybrid	16	2.5
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	22	3.25
Tera	19	4.0
Test Drive: Ferrari Racing Legends	21	3.0
Tetris Axis	15	3.25
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	20	4.25
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	18	4.0
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier	20	4.0
Transformers: Fall of Cybertron	22	4.25
Twisted Metal	18	3.75

U		
UFC Undisputed 3	17	3.0
Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3	16	5.0
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	15	5.0
Unit 13	18	4.0

W		
The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings	19	4.5
WWE '12	16	4.0

Y		
Yakuza: Dead Souls	19	3.25
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2012	16	4.5

Z		
Zumba Fitness Rush	18	4.5

RAZER

Naga
EXPERT MMO
GAMING MOUSE



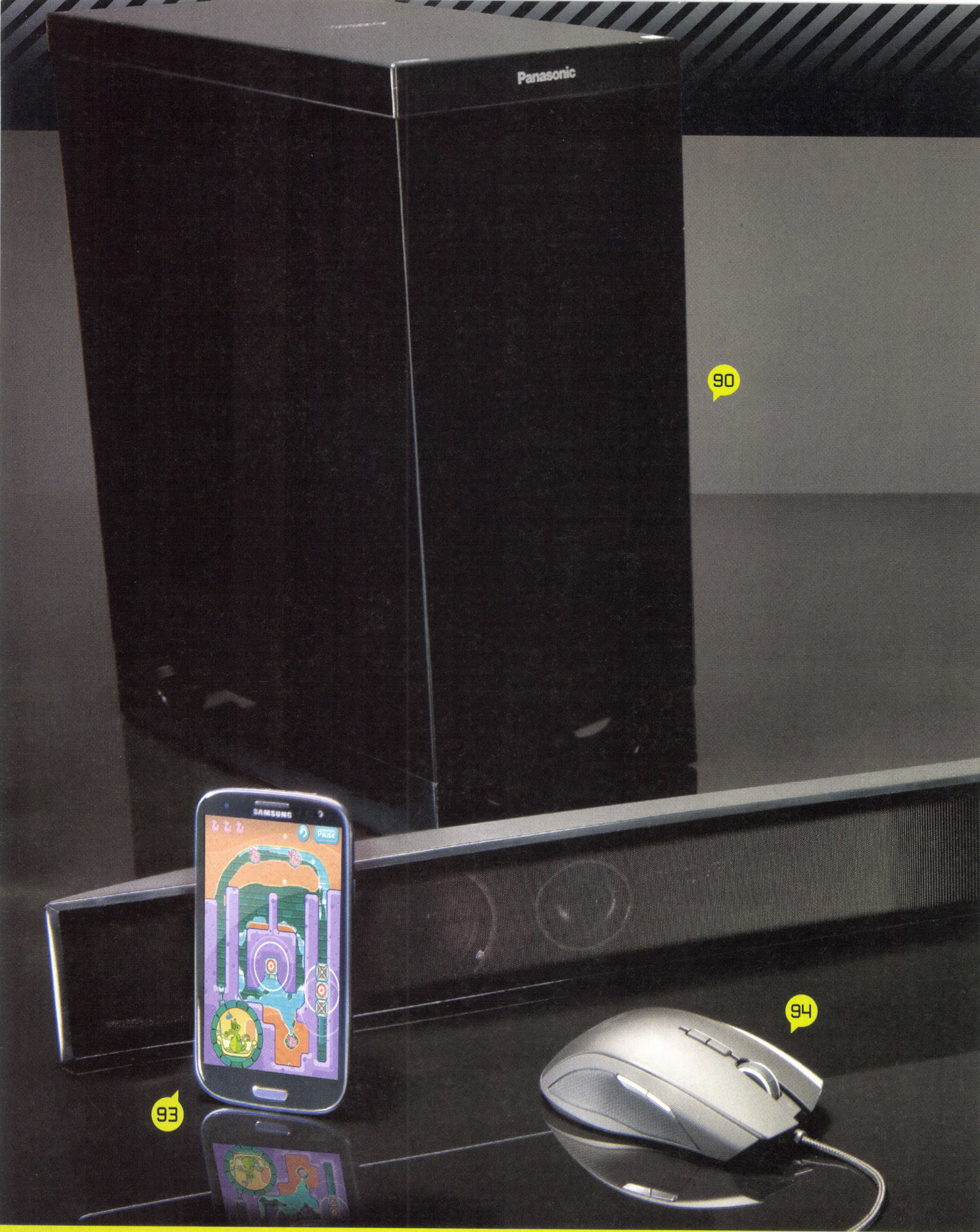
Get Amba

- 17 MMO-optimized buttons
- Three interchangeable side panels
- Razer Synapse 2.0

FOR GAMERS. BY GAMERS.™

www.razerzone.com

© 2011 All Rights Reserved. Razer USA Ltd and affiliated companies. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Actual products may differ from pictures. Information correct at time of printing.



Panasonic

90

93

94



Where to purchase? Online

Visit www.bestbuy.com
for info on availability.



95



92

- 90 Panasonic 2.1-Channel Home Theater Speaker System/Soundbar
- 92 Samsung Galaxy Tab 7.7 (8GB) Android Tablet
- 93 Samsung Galaxy SIII Smartphone
- 94 Razer Taipan Gaming Mouse
- 95 SMS Audio SYNC by 50 Cent Over-Ear Wireless Headphones



WIL SAYS:

We were stoked to get our hands on some tasty new gear this month. Panasonic's 2.1-Channel Soundbar made such games as *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* and *Spec Ops: The Line* sound even better. There's been a ton of mobile news lately, so we put two of the latest Android devices through their paces. We even got to test headphones by 50 Cent!

Panasonic

PANASONIC 2.1-CH.
HOME THEATER
SPEAKER SYSTEM
SC-HTB350

Manufacturer: Panasonic
www.panasonic.com

Price: \$299.99

OVERALL SCORE: 3.75



01

A

B

MIX AND MATCH

A One really cool thing about this soundbar is that you can tweak the configuration if you prefer a more traditional setup.

B If you'd prefer, you can go for the typical soundbar setup—and either configuration can be wall-mounted.

02

PANASONIC 2.1-CH. HOME THEATER SPEAKER SYSTEM SC-HTB350


Good sound that won't break the bank • Words: William O'Neal

When it comes to home audio, I'm convinced soundbars are the future. Before, gamers interested in setting up an awesome surround-sound experience had to get a separate AV receiver and run wires all over the place. Having a messy, wire-laden room can be even more difficult when significant others are thrown into the mix.

As with all tech, the soundbar marketplace is all over the map. We got our hands on Panasonic's 2.1-Channel SC-HTB350, a lower-priced option (at around \$299.99) and put it through its paces.

Setting the unit up was relatively painless. The receiver boasts all of the connections that you'd expect—multiple HDMI and optical ports are present here—though it took some time to get the wireless subwoofer working. There's no real display to tell you what's going on—rather, there are a series of diagnostic lights that have you running for the manual to decipher. All was good in the world once I got the thing up and running: I hooked the unit up to a 70-inch Sharp Aquos HDTV and loaded up Ghost Recon: Future Soldier, with solid results.

The SC-HTB350 is a 2.1-channel system that aims to emulate various surround modes. If there's a shortcoming to this unit, this is one of them. A virtual surround experience, while better than a typical 2.1-channel option, cannot compete with a real surround-sound system. Gamers looking for a more legit surround option may want to go more high-end. Additionally, the wireless subwoofer lacked the oomph that I expected to hear.

Even so, the SC-HTB350 is a good setup that's way better than TV audio. 

01 BOOM

Boasting a wireless subwoofer means that you can store this baby anywhere in the room.

02 SPEAKERS

It's easy to change the set-up from a traditional soundbar to separate vertical speakers.

03 GET AMPED

I had mixed feelings about adding another piece of kit to my already crowded gaming setup.



SAMSUNG GALAXY
TAB 7.7 (VERIZON)

Manufacturer: Samsung
www.samsung.com
 Price: \$449.99

OVERALL SCORE: 3.5



01

02

03

SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB 7.7 (VERIZON)

A nice mid-sized tablet—we're just not sure who it's for • Words: William O'Neal

Samsung seems to make devices for everyone: Big, small, mid-sized gadgets—regardless of what you're in the market for, Samsung's business philosophy seems to be, "if you want it, we've got it"...which brings me to the Samsung Galaxy Tab 7.7.

I got this model from Verizon and really enjoyed using it along with the carrier's 4G LTE network. The 7-inch AMOLED is nice and vibrant, and games looked great on it.

Additionally, when compared to a 10-inch tablet, the Galaxy Tab 7.7's smaller form factor was welcome on my commutes. However, at around \$450, this thing is almost the same price as Apple's new iPad, which is the gold standard in tablets.

Sporting Android's Honeycomb OS, the device has outstanding battery life, which comes in handy considering it was designed for those who are constantly on the go. The

last thing you want is to have your battery conk out mid-flight in the middle of a game of N.O.V.A. 3.

The most appealing thing about this device is easily Verizon's 4G LTE network. There are currently plenty of other 7-inch Android tablets that are less expensive, but if you absolutely need an always-connected tablet, then you'd do well to give Verizon's Galaxy Tab 7.7 a look.

01 CAMERA

The Samsung Galaxy Tab 7.7 rocks a front-facing camera, which is great for video chatting.

02 DISPLAY

Though not quite as awesome as Apple's Retina Display, the Galaxy's screen is impressive.

03 THIN

The case is thin and light—and while Samsung claims you can put it in a coat pocket, we disagree.

SAMSUNG GALAXY SIII SMARTPHONE

SAMSUNG GALAXY SIII SMARTPHONE

Manufacturer: Samsung
www.samsung.com
Price: \$199.99 - \$299.99

OVERALL SCORE: 4.5



Samsung ups the smartphone ante with an awesome handset • Words: William O'Neal

While rumors around the iPhone 5 are rampant, the fact remains that they're just that: rumors. For those of us who'd rather not wait, Samsung has what may be the hottest phone of the year: the Samsung Galaxy SIII.

Boasting a Snapdragon processor, an incredible 4.8-inch Super AMOLED HD screen, 2GB of RAM, and some of the best battery life I've ever experienced with a phone, there's really no reason to not jump

on the SIII bandwagon. For this story I tested the AT&T model, but every major U.S. carrier is also offering this phone.

The first thing that jumps out at you when you unbox the Galaxy SIII is that massive 4.8-inch Super AMOLED HD screen. I know, I know, not everyone likes the idea of playing games on a tiny cell phone screen. And that's what's awesome about this handset—the screen is big enough that even old guys like

me will actually enjoy playing games on this thing. If you are into gaming, the Google Play store (formerly known as the Android Marketplace) isn't suffering from a dearth of titles—personally, I really enjoyed the racing games the most.

Boasting an awesome 8-megapixel camera, great battery life, and Android's latest Ice Cream Sandwich operating system, Android users will love this handset. Ⓢ

01 SAY CHEESE

The Galaxy SIII boasts an 8-megapixel camera that takes great pictures.



02 4.8-INCHES?!

The huge screen makes the Galaxy SIII a real treat to use.

03 BLUE OR WHITE?

The brushed polycarbonate shell comes in both Marble White and Pebble Blue.



SAMSUNG HAS
WHAT MAY BE THE
HOTTEST PHONE OF
THE YEAR



RAZER TAIPAN AMBIDEXTROUS GAMING MOUSE

RAZER TAIPAN AMBIDEXTROUS GAMING MOUSE

Manufacturer: Razer

www.razerzone.com

Price: \$79.99

OVERALL SCORE: 3.5



A mouse for anyone, at least in theory • Words: William O'Neal

Gaming mice can be a tough sell. Why pay extra for something that pretty much comes with every system? This is probably the existential question at the beginning of every product development meeting for gadgets like this.

Razer hopes to answer that question with yet another one of its mice built specifically with gamers in mind. In the case of the Taipan, the most obvious selling point is the

fact that it truly is completely ambidextrous. While the world isn't suffering from a lack of feature-rich mice, southpaws are often left out in the cold. To that end the Taipan is perfectly symmetrical, even down to the rubberized thumb grips.

Sporting nine programmable buttons—in addition to rocking an 8200dpi 4G Dual Sensor System for precision—the Taipan is a perfectly capable mouse. That's sort of what

its biggest problem is: It's a pretty average mouse. In a marketplace that includes such awesome options as the CYBORG R.A.T., it's sort of hard to get excited about the Taipan. And, well, if I'm gonna drop \$80 on a mouse I better be pumped about it.

Additionally, I found the mouse to be too small. This made it difficult to access some of the buttons, which defeats the purpose of having them. But hey, I'm a righty. ☹

01 LEFTY?

Southpaws will appreciate that the Razer Taipan lets them get in on the gaming action.



02 SLEEK

The Taipan is sleek. I just wish it had a bit more heft, like many of the other gaming mice on the market.



03 CUSTOM

Every gamer is different, so the inclusion of a bevy of customizable buttons is a major plus.

03

01

02

THE TAIPAN IS PERFECTLY
SYMMETRICAL, EVEN DOWN
TO THE RUBBERIZED
THUMB GRIPS

01 A DONGLE?

These headphones use a Klear Wireless-enabled dongle. While it makes for better audio quality than Bluetooth, dongles are a pain.



02 COMFORTABLE

The earcups on these headphones are plenty comfy. I had no problem rocking them all day.

03 FLIMSY

Considering the price point, I expected these headphones to feel expensive. They don't. Actually, the plastic feels pretty cheap.



SMS AUDIO SYNC BY 50 CENT OVER-EAR WIRELESS HEADPHONES

50 Cent should stick to hip hop and Vitaminwater • Words: William O'Neal

Ever since Dr. Dre scored a hit with his Monster Beats line of headphones and earphones, every rapper in the world has jumped on the bandwagon. While Ludacris has the Soul SL300s, 50 Cent now has the SYNC. The problem is that, at around \$400, I really expected to be wowed and...well, was wowed. I was wowed at how disappointing these headphones were.

From a technological standpoint, the SYNC by 50 Cent seemed promising. Rather than go with a Bluetooth option, SMS Audio opted instead to

go with Klear Wireless. The thing is, while Klear Wireless is superior to Bluetooth for audio quality, I really hated having to use the dongle while on the go. When tethered to my desktop it was fine. Not so much when on the move.

Adding insult to injury, the SYNC doesn't really incorporate any noise-cancelling technology. If that's not enough, the plastic housing feels really cheap. Considering what they're asking, there are a ton of really awesome alternatives out there at—or even below—this price point. ☹

SMS AUDIO SYNC BY 50 CENT OVER-EAR WIRELESS HEADPHONES

Manufacturer: SMS Audio
www.smsby50.com

Price: \$399.99

OVERALL SCORE: 2.75

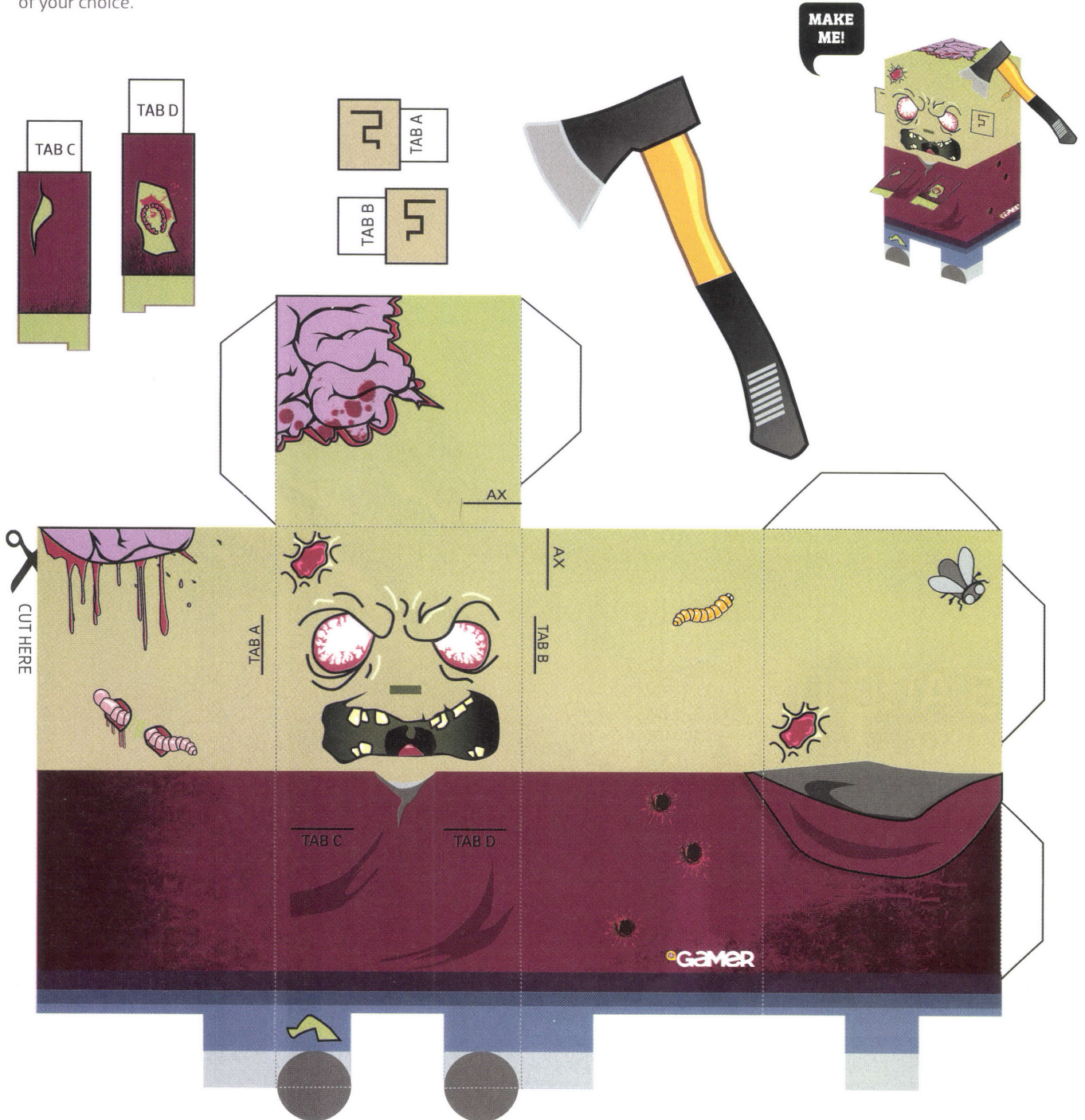


PAPERCRAFT

RESIDENT EVIL 6

ASSEMBLE
AND COLLECT
@GAMER
PAPERCRAFT
CUTOUTS!

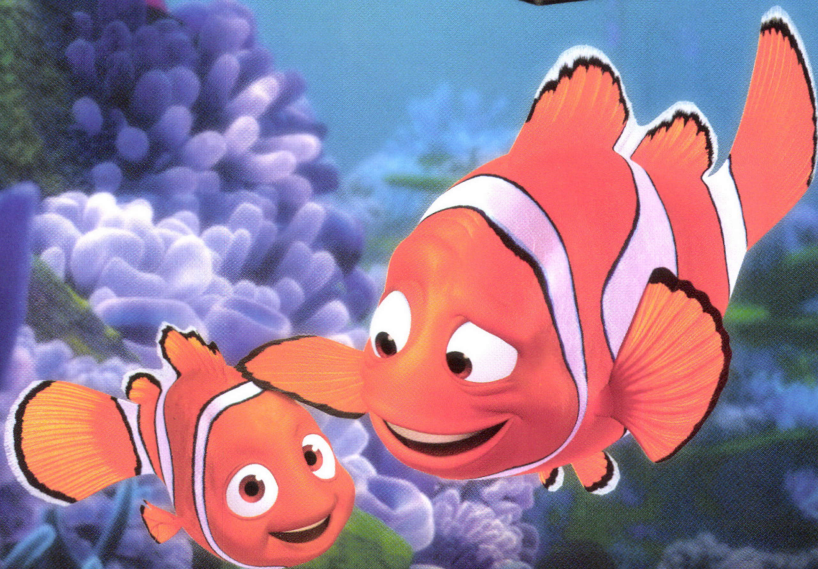
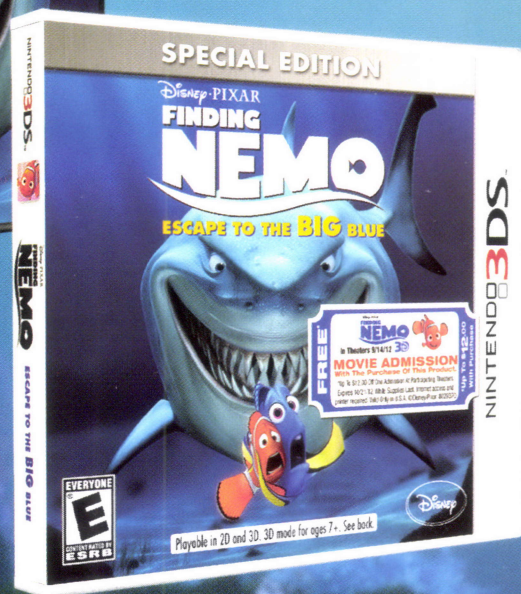
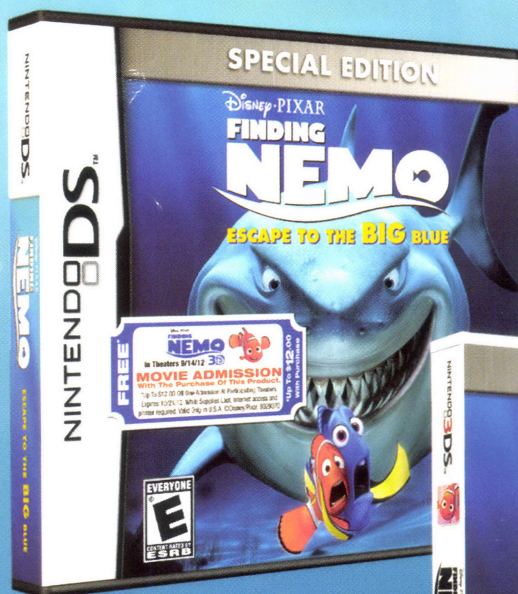
Want thicker, larger, and genuinely more awesome papercraft? Head over to www.atgamer magazine.com, download our papercraft, and print it out on the paper of your choice.



Disney • PIXAR
FREE¹ FINDING NEMO^{3D} MOVIE ADMISSION



With Purchase of Specially Marked
Disney Movies² & Games²



NINTENDO DS™

NINTENDO 3DS™



Offer valid through 10/6/12. ¹ Up to \$12.00 at participating theaters. ² Finding Nemo for Nintendo DS™ (Available 9/11), Finding Nemo for Nintendo 3DS™ (Available 9/11). *See stores for availability. Good in U.S.A. only. While supplies last. Void where prohibited. See package sticker (or Customer Specialist) for details. Nintendo trademarks and copyrights are properties of Nintendo. Distributed by Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, Burbank, CA 91521. © 2012 Disney/Pixar

UNLEASHED



WARHEAD 7.1

Uncompromising performance,

wireless freedom, immersive

Dolby 7.1 surround audio.

The premier gaming headset.

"... the Warhead 7.1 offers the best overall user experience we've seen in an Xbox 360 headset."

engadget



Available Now



5.8 GHz True Wireless



TRITONAUDIO.COM

©2012 Mad Catz, Inc. TRITON, Warhead, and the TRITON logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Mad Catz Interactive, Inc., its subsidiaries and affiliates. The shape and design of this product are a trade dress of Mad Catz Interactive, Inc., its subsidiaries and affiliates. This product is manufactured under license from Microsoft Corporation. Microsoft, Kinect, Xbox, Xbox LIVE, Xbox 360, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies.